



Muslim Politics In Bengal 1855-1906



Jayanti Maitra



This book examines the first phase of Muslim separatism in Bengal, a concomitant development of the confrontation of British imperialism with Indian nationalism. From the formulation of a separatist ideology to the organization of separatist politics, the Bengali Muslims played a significant part throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. The main foci of this work have been a growing awareness of a distinct Muslim identity vis-a-vis the disparate development of the Hindus and the Muslims, particularly in Bengal under British rule; the deliberate reinforcement of this separate identity by the bureaucracy as a counterpoise to the nationalist agitation; and the indifference of the majority community to the more sensitive issues of the day. Within this broad framework, the interplay of several forces and factors led to the gradual politicization of the Muslims which thrived on a secessionist ideology and divisive tactics. This work aims to show the extent to which events in Bengal galvanized Muslim political activism on an all-India scale and how the triad of Hindu, Muslim and British relations underwent a major reorientation throughout this crucial period of half a century.







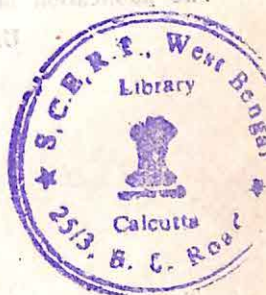
MUSLIM POLITICS IN BENGAL
1855-1906

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Collaboration and Confrontation

Jayanti Maitra



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To
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PREFACE

The study of nineteenth-century Bengal, though a much traversed field, has neither ceased to arouse special interest nor exhausted the possibilities for fresh research. The scope of the present study is confined to Bengal proper, i.e., linguistic Bengal. The main purpose of the work is to study the interplay of forces and factors that led to the emergence of Muslim separatism in Bengal, a concomitant development of the confrontation of British imperialism with Indian nationalism. The period from 1855, the year which witnessed the inception of the premier political organization of the Muslims in Bengal, to 1906 when the All India Muslim League was launched at Dacca was the seed-time of vast changes. It was then that the issues were framed, the propositions laid down, the attitudes defined and the persistent pattern of Hindu-Muslim relations cast.

The dialectics of this process of separatism is, however, studied in the narrower framework of a clash of cultures and a conflict over material interests among the upper and middle class Hindu and Muslim intelligentsia during the period under review. It also takes into consideration other manifestations of communalism to the extent that they had an impact on the main theme. The emphasis is not on 'history from below', though the study comes to a close at a point when the masses had been successfully drawn into the vortex of political agitation. The latter, however, participated in this movement not because they had any immediate interest in it, but mainly because their support was necessary for the ultimate success of the agitation launched by the rich and powerful Urdu-speaking elite of urban Bengal. From considerations of space it was deemed wise to make only cursory references to the politics of local self-government, of municipal administration, and several allied topics that come within the natural purview of such a study. But since the subject has over the recent years caught the imagination of scholars and researchers, much work has already been done and is also in the process of being

executed which might at least furnish a cause, if not an excuse, for some notable omissions.

This book which is actually a revised version of my doctoral dissertation has been in gestation for quite a few years now. It may be added with a note of regret that an early publication might have anticipated certain views recently published and could have avoided some duplication of reference to source materials. Nevertheless permitting an iota of optimism, it may be submitted that so far as the main thrust of the thesis is concerned, it follows an independent line of argument and analysis, the responsibility for the merits and demerits of which remains solely mine.

The materials which have been utilized in writing this book have been collected from the National Archives of India (New Delhi), the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in the Teen Murti Bhavan (New Delhi), the National Library (Calcutta), the West Bengal State Archives, the library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and the libraries of Jadavpur and Calcutta Universities.

To my research supervisor, Professor Amitabha Mukherjee of Jadavpur University, I must record my sincerest gratitude for his unflinching advice and assistance. But for the systematic policy of 'buffets and boons' of my teacher and colleague Dr. Nemai Sadhan Bose, this book might have still remained in hibernation. To my parents I owe more than I can express. To my husband I am grateful for more reasons than one. To my little daughter I owe the delay in the publication of this work.

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Introduction

The establishment of British hegemony in Bengal and its gradual extension to the rest of India represented for the Muslims, in the most general terms, the loss of political sovereignty along with the manifold perquisites associated with it. But the response of the Muslim community to British rule did not crystallize into a single but a plurality of patterns in different regions. In the north-west, which came under British rule much later, Muslim upper class dominance remained entrenched for quite sometime, whereas in Bengal the *ashraf* (upper class) Muslims, who had always been a relatively small community, more dependent on state patronage, were the earliest and worst victims of colonial administration. That the Muslims of the subcontinent were not a homogeneous community in terms of racial, cultural, economic, linguistic and even sectarian status largely explains the above anomaly.

This dichotomy, more sharply focussed in Bengal than elsewhere in the country, invested the Bengal Muslim problem with peculiar dimensions. There existed sharp differences between the urban-based, Urdu-speaking upper class immigrant Muslims, sullenly resentful of the successive changes in the administrative set-up, and the bulk of the Bengali-speaking rural Muslim masses of indigenous origin, steeped in ignorance and all-round backwardness. This disjunction between the upper and the lower classes was exacerbated by the fact that Muslim leadership, recruited mainly from the upper strata, showed a marked contempt for the basic problems and interests of their humbler co-religionists in the rural hinterlands. The Muslim masses in general, representing the peasantry, the artisans and the day-labourers in the towns were extremely poor. They were also drawn through the increasing role of the money economy into a network of exploitation and domination by a

moneyed class which happened to be Hindu. In such a situation, the fanatical appeals of *Faraizi mullahs* raised a host of crescentaders up in arms for deliverance from economic exploitation, and ultimately from the British Raj which was supposed to have fostered that system. The delayed emergence of an educated Muslim middle class and the absence among them of a commercial and financial bourgeoisie on a substantial scale, along with their failure 'to make terms with modern thought' made the Bengali Muslims in the long run 'a people without a career'. This condition appeared more galling when set against that of the English-educated urban community Bengali Hindu in composition and pro-British in character, who became the *avant-garde* of the Bengal renaissance. In the long run, the differential development of the two principal communities created a lag in modernization between the backward Muslims and the advancing Hindus. In a large measure this explains the subsequent demand for separate educational facilities, the factional struggle for jobs and the adoption of divergent political methods felt to be particularly necessary by the Muslim community to guard their 'additional' interests, which were not shared by others who were more advanced and less disadvantaged. The above background helps us to understand why the cry of an all-round threat to Muslim interests and the repeated pleas for special consideration and separate community treatment emanated from the Muslim elite of Bengal.

It is the central argument of this study that the seeds of the Muslim separatist movement in India germinated in Bengal. The diverse reactions of the Hindus and the Muslims of the province to English rule and the consequent imbalance in their development, culminating in a conflict over material interests, gave birth to a Hindu-Muslim problem manifest in the clash of their respective religions and cultures. Face to face with the British and the English-knowing Hindus, the Muslims of Bengal, prior to the outbreak of the Revolt of 1857, were confronted with a set of historical antecedents, whereby they could ill afford to remain apathetic. Even before they had taken to western education and much earlier than their co-religionists in other parts of India, the Bengali Muslims had realized the value of western education and the necessity

of forming associations. But their slow politicization was the unfortunate result of a negative realization of their educational backwardness and virtual exclusion from the various departments of state service. Therefore, what started as a solicitous request for special treatment and privileges in the spheres of education and service, in order to check the growing disparity between the backward Muslim and the advancing Hindu, was pushed step by step into the sphere of politics, culminating in the demand for separate electorates and the establishment of a separate political organization for the Muslims in 1906.

The study opens with an account of the Islamic revivalist movements in India in the early nineteenth century and their impact on the Muslim mind and society in Bengal. In spite of centuries of co-existence, a Hindu-Muslim fissure was maintained on the basis of socio-religious exclusivism, which acquired new dimensions from the Islamic revivalist movements of the first half of the nineteenth century variously known as the *Wahhabi*, *Faraizi*, *Tariquat-i-Mahammadiyah*, *Ta'aiyuni* or the *Ahl-i-Hadith*. The Muslim masses of rural Bengal, unrepresented by the articulate sections of their society, were left disoriented in the face of crisis. They fell an easy prey to the revivalist doctrines propagated by their spiritual guides which 'did encourage communal attitudes especially in religious thinking and left a considerable section of them more susceptible to later communalist propaganda than they might otherwise have been.' A physiognomical and demographic study of Bengal revealed the existence of a Muslim majority particularly in the eastern districts of Bengal. The knowledge of their ever-growing numbers made the Muslims more assertive about their rights and privileges. But on the other hand, the 'low-caste theory' advanced by officialdom to explain the Muslim majority in Bengal, produced a marked tendency on their part to repudiate their Bengali origin and culture. Against the general phenomenon of Muslim 'depression' in Bengal inasmuch as they were adversely affected by British legislation, a small segment of the articulate Muslim society became more immediately concerned with a particular aspect of their socio-economic problem—to secure job opportunities by a diffusion of western education within the community. The foundation of the premier political organization of the Muslims in Calcutta in 1855 provided a

forum for the expression of such views.

The post-Mutiny period was marked by the development of modernism among the Muslims along with loyalism to the British Government. It has been shown that the chief protagonist of Muslim modernism in Bengal, Nawab Abdul Latif Khan Bahadur (1828-1893), had anticipated in many ways the course of action adopted by the more celebrated leader of the Muslims all over India, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898). Historically, it may be stated that the Revolt of 1857 made the British Government see the need to sow the seeds of exclusiveness. It was the direct rule of the Crown that helped the growth of the policy of divide and rule. The bias traceable in British officialdom in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in favour of the Muslim community, partly on the ground of closer sympathy, but more largely as a makeweight against the nationalist agitation of the educated intelligentsia comprising mainly the Hindus, was gradually turned into an administrative system. The rout of the miscarried uprising of 1857 and the suppression of the so-called *Wahhabi* agitation set the Muslims in the decades following the Mutiny on the path of 'halting addresses' and 'ever loyal approach' as the only way of securing bureaucratic clemency. This Anglo-centric programme of the Muslims clashed with the constitutional agitation of the sixties which tended to identify nationalism with Hinduism. The rising tide of nationalist agitation sponsored by the Hindu intelligentsia drove the Muslims (who at that time had nothing to gain from political concessions), and the English rulers (who were thinking in terms of a 'positive counterpoise' to the nationalist agitation) into each other's arms. For the first time in the history of Anglo-Muslim relations was evolved an *entente cordiale* or an alliance of convenience, to be more precise.

Meanwhile, the educational backwardness of the Muslims and their gradual exclusion from the various departments of Government service became the starting-point of a new reaction whose ardent spokesman was Syed Ameer Ali (1849-1928). Latif had objected to the Muslims studying in educational institutions with 'too much of Hindoo influence', but Ali went a step forward. In the struggle for existence, the Muslims were the weakest compared to the rich and pushing Hindus. There-

fore, it was absolutely necessary for the Government 'to redress the balance of state patronage' on the basis of special consideration and separate community treatment. These viewpoints were outlined at great length in the famous Memorial of 1882. In direct contravention of Sir Syed's 'mandate of exclusion' of the Muslims from political agitation in any shape or form, Ameer Ali launched the National Mahomedan Association in 1877, which had its branches spread all over India. As a matter of fact, in 1866 when Sir Syed launched the British Indian Association at Aligarh, it was in its organization and composition, a Hindu-Muslim joint enterprise. But ten years later, when Ameer Ali refused to join Surendranath Banerjea's Indian Association, it was perhaps the first Muslim refusal to be a party to a nationalist organization dominated by the Hindu intelligentsia. In fact, Ali was one of the earliest of the Muslim leaders to realize and endorse the view that notwithstanding the common interests of all the communities, the Muslims had particular interests which concerned them alone. It was therefore impossible for them to merge their separate communal identity in that of any other nationality, or to strive for the attainment of their ideals under the aegis of any other organization than their own. His solution for this dilemma was 'a pressure group run by Muslims specifically for Muslims', and its programme was based 'squarely upon the demand for preferential treatment'.

This demand for separate community treatment fitted in well with the bureaucratic policy which after 1857 encouraged the development of political consciousness among religious communities. During the sixties and seventies of the nineteenth century, the bureaucracy went out of its way to look upon the Muslims as 'a large and important class' and made it their 'political object' to conciliate them. The trend in official policy from 1871 to 1882 shows how starting on the premise of adopting 'some general measures in regard to Muhammadan education' (Mayo's Resolution of 7 August 1871), a situation was reached in 1882, when the Hunter Commission categorically stated that 'special cases' needed 'special treatment'. The net gains of the Muslims during this period were 'special concessions' in the form of separate scholarships and stipends, maintenance of their exclusive institutions for the study of

their religious literature, and the appointment of Muslim teachers and inspectors to look after their special interests. The demands of the Muslims by 1881 also underwent important changes. From special concessions to separate establishments was the direction in which the Muslim wishes began to be ventilated in a more pronounced manner. In the sphere of employment, the Government declaration 'to redress the inequality' of the Muslims (Resolution of 1885) marked a significant turning-point. The Muslims regarded the Resolution as 'a charter of their emancipation from the thralldom of their fellow-subjects.' The solicitude of the Government for the Muslims was well rewarded by the latter becoming comparatively more well-disposed towards their erstwhile conquerors. As the Anglo-Muslim gulf was bridged, the Hindu-Muslim gulf widened.

From the days of Dufferin and Lord Cross, the separate 'interest of the Mohammaders' served as the most convenient British conservative pretext for obstructing or delaying political reform in India. The Muslims had also taken their cue from the bureaucracy; and a spokesman from Bengal, Mahomed Yusuf, had actually put forth the demand for separate representation for the Muslims as early as May 1883, in connection with the legislation for local self-government on an elective basis. The development of the Muslims along separatist lines culminated in the secession of the Calcutta Muslim leaders from the second session of the Indian National Congress in 1886. This was followed a year later by Sir Syed's first public denunciation of the Congress. An anti-Congress propaganda in the press as well as on the platform henceforward became a regular feature of Muslim political activism. While initially the Congress gave little thought to the Muslims, it soon discovered the tactical importance of being able to show that it had Muslim support. The Government on its part found it useful to deny the existence of any such common front. It was only at this stage that Muslim attitudes towards an all-India movement began to take shape, especially when the seeds of separate representation were sown in the Indian Councils Act of 1892.

The turn of the century witnessed significant developments in the history of communal relations culminating in the trilogy of the Partition of Bengal in 1905, the Muslim deputation to

the Viceroy at Simla on 1 October, 1906, and the foundation of the All-India Muslim League in December, 1906. The Partition of Bengal in 1905 provided the Bengali Muslims with that vested interest which they needed to associate politically with their co-religionists of upper India. The greatest mistake that the nationalists committed was to allow the anti-Partition agitation to develop into a Hindu-Muslim question, and thereby play into the hands of the British Government which had executed this territorial re-adjustment with the deliberate intention of giving a political booster to the separatist feelings of the Muslims. For 'it was the fact rather than the prospect of partition that crystallized Muslim opinion against the anti-partition agitation.' The Muslims all over India rose in defence of their interests which resulted in the historic deputation to the Viceroy at Simla on 1 October, 1906. An attempt has been made here to show that some of the top civilians were using the frustration of the Muslims of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam in influencing the Viceroy and his Private Secretary to give a sympathetic hearing to the Muslim deputation that was under contemplation. Although the case of the Bengali Muslims precipitated the Simla deputation, yet the omission of the Partition question in the address presented to the Viceroy was one of the many instances in which the interests of the former were subordinated to, or even thwarted by their more influential brethren in upper India. Earlier, an attempt made by Ameer Ali to convene an all-India conference of the Muslims had come to naught mainly because of the opposition of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. Had this conference materialized, the history of the Muslim League would have been anticipated at least twenty years earlier.

The success of the Simla Deputation encouraged the Muslims to assert and define their separate communal identity in the context of active all-India politics. The Viceroy's recognition of the Muslim demand for separate representation did not initiate a new policy, but simply confirmed and brought to its logical conclusion the policy of fostering caste, class and communal divisions pursued by his predecessors in the successive stages of constitutional reforms. With the establishment of the Muslim League at Dacca in 1906, communalism came to be established definitely in Indian politics.

The Muslim League was largely based on the scheme of Nawab Salimullah of Dacca, and it was even admitted that none but the Nawab 'could have brought this to pass'. Moreover, the League could not have been founded anywhere else but at Dacca. At Aligarh, the foundation of a political organization marking a departure from Sir Syed's policy was resisted by the trustees of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College even after Sir Syed's death. Secondly, it was the contention of the Muslim leaders of the new province that at Dacca, Muslims from all other parts of India could receive an object lesson on the necessity of a political organization for the purpose of ventilating the grievances of an inarticulate community. Subsequently when the London branch of the Muslim League was founded in May 1908, it was mainly due to the efforts of Syed Ameer Ali as its President, that the Secretary of State John Morley was converted back from his own scheme of electoral colleges to the original scheme of separate electorates, and the Reforms of 1909 gave the Muslims a constitutional identity which brought to a logical conclusion the first phase of Muslim separatism.

It may be interesting in this connection to draw attention to the characteristic reaction of the Anglo-Indian press which underwent no change during the fifty years that elapsed between 1855 and 1906. The *Friend of India* looked upon the premier political organization of the Muslims in Bengal founded in 1855 as a 'counterpoise' to the other existing associations. The *Englishman* looked upon the League as providing 'an effective answer to the Congress', and therefore it was not only 'to be welcomed', but also 'to be fostered'. The League, if not the premier political organization of the Muslims, was the first concrete expression of a process of political separatism translated into the realm of practical politics. The root of this political polarization may be traced to 'a clash of cultures and a conflict over the distribution of power' aggravated by the struggle between the Hindu and Muslim vested interests. In the ultimate analysis, it was not religion which divided the Hindus and the Muslims politically, though religious prejudices were blatantly exploited as a feeder catalyst to the latent communal antagonism, resulting in sporadic outbursts of riots in post-Partition Bengal.

Islam in Bengal

Reaction and Revivalism

Bengal was struck by Islam at a period of transition from a debased but popular form of Hinduized Buddhism to a vigorous attempt at cultural domination by Brahmanical Hinduism under the Sena Kings. By the tenth century the Bengali mind had already started 'a campaign against Brahmanism and all that it stood for'.¹ The time was thus opportune for Islam to cut 'the sheet anchor of Hindu ascendancy by converting the sturdy lower classes and fanning the neophytes' fanaticism against the higher classes.² The Muslim conquest in Bengal penetrated to the very core of its society and culture and succeeded in exercising a great influence on the life and thought of the non-Muslim population. Islam's message of social equality appealed to the natural emotionalism of the Bengalis who welcomed it as a deliverance from social oppression. The new culture introduced by the Muslims did not, however, remain 'purely Islamic in its new geographical set-up'. Through centuries of intermixing with the local populace various cults, customs and ceremonies crept into the Muslim way of life and gradually acquired an Islamic orientation. The local influences, ranging from idolatrous propitiation of the goddess of smallpox and hagiolatry down to some amount of caste prejudice, which thus infiltrated into the Muslim society, hedged round the pure doctrines and institutions of Islam. 'The original form of Islam survived only in the fundamentals of beliefs and practices.'³ Much of this fusion of beliefs and rites was, of course, due to the eclectic character of Hinduism which readily accepted the worship of any saint or even of a martyr. But it also pointed to 'the close association of Hinduism and Islam among the lower class votaries

of both religions, a union based upon the ethnical identity of the two bodies'.⁴ The upper strata of the Muslim society in Bengal, 'an extension of the Muslim society of Northern India', consisting of princes, high officials and *zamindars*, did not believe in these local cults and innovations but tolerated them. The Muslim theologians on their part kept themselves aloof from the un-Islamic innovations, but then generally adhered to one or the other of the great mystic orders, viz., *Qadiriya*, *Chistiyah*, *Naqshbandiyah*, and *Suhrawardiyah*, which gradually came to be recognized as orthodox by the Muslims of this sub-continent.⁵

Beneath the process of integration that was gradually going on, lay latent the divisive forces which proved much stronger than the cohesive ones, when the material interests of the Hindus and Muslims clashed. The two communities whose social cleavage was based on an 'insular co-existence' continued to retain a sense of separate identity even at the village level. In a large measure this was due to the fact that the pre-modern synthesis had serious limitations. The syncretist tendencies too often 'took the form of irrational devotionism and superstitions shared in common.' Consequently, the religious reform movements from the fifteenth century onwards, both Hindu and Muslim, 'were bound to regard such cults and rites as a debasement of the pristine purity of their respective faiths.'⁶

While Islam's challenge provoked the *Bhakti* reaction and resistance to the proselytizing pull of *Sufi* humanism, the tradition of Islamic conservatism as a counter to the policy of Indianization of the Mughal administration and culture started as early as the seventeenth century. The *Naqshbandi* order, closer to orthodoxy than any other *Sufi* school, was sponsored by Khwaja Baqi Billah and reached its culmination in the life and work of his most distinguished disciple, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi who was 'the first to raise the banner of Reformation and Revivalism in India'. Sirhindi and his followers laid emphasis on *Sunni* separatism and opposed all attempts to evolve a composite culture. This orthodox reaction was carried on by Aurangzeb, whose administrative measures forecast the intellectual scheme of reforms advocated by Shah Wali-Ullah (1703-62) a generation later. A definite re-

formist trend began with Wali-Ullah who represented a surprising modernism some years prior to the impact of western influence on Indian Islam. To wean away the new converts to Islam from a spiritual situation that remained crypto-Hindu, Wali-Ullah endeavoured to establish pure monotheism and purge the Muslim society of all the polytheistic and un-Islamic practices that had surfaced in the Hindu environment. His son Shah Abdul Aziz (1746-1823), and grandson, Ismail (1781-1831), preached his ideals. The Shah's influence was reflected in almost all the subsequent Islamic religio-intellectual developments of the sub-continent.

The crisis in the Muslim society was further accentuated by the emergence of the British in the political arena of the Indian sub-continent, and the gradual subversion of a conservative oriental structure by ideas and values imported from the progressive West. The religious temper of the Muslims at this juncture was a reflection of their many misfortunes. A feeling gained ground among them that their political decadence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was mainly due to their deviation from the original doctrines of Islam. The religious leaders, therefore, thought it their sacred duty to revive the religious tradition (*Sunnah*). Most of the syncretic sects that had arisen in the previous centuries were now looked upon by the ordinary Hindu or Muslim as 'spiritual freaks' and were denounced by the religious leaders of both the communities. In the nineteenth century most of these sects collapsed before the assault of the Hindu and Muslim reformist and fundamentalist movements, and took to orthodoxy in one religion or the other.

The militant movement for the rehabilitation of Islam in India in the early years of the nineteenth century was categorized as *Wahhabi* by the British, on the basis of the Arabian parallel of that name. Started in AD 1818 at Delhi by Sayyid Ahmad of Rai Bareilly (1786-1831) and Shah Ismail Shahid (AD 1781-1831), the movement may be more aptly named the *Tariqat-i-Muhammadiyah* (the path of Muhammad). Sayyid Ahmad tried 'to save and reconstruct the essentially Islamic element in the early nineteenth-century Indo-Muslim way of life into an exclusive emphasis on the *Quran* and *Sunnah* and the rejection of the peripheral, the eclectic, the syncretic

and heterodox.⁷ In another aspect, the movement led by Sayyid Ahmad and his band of warriors, gave a clarion call for a *jihad* or holy war against the British on the one hand, and the Sikhs, 'the inveterate foes of the Muslims' and 'the allies of the Government', on the other. The *Wahhabi* outlook on political and religious life embodied the century-old hostility of the Muslim ruling classes to the growing encroachments of the British, as also the urge of the working masses for better and happier conditions of life. 'It is not, therefore, surprising if the Wahabi leaders of the day displayed both the vigour and tenacity of the working people and the confusions of a decadent ruling class.'⁸ Armed with a consistent anti-British ideology, and with the backing of a network of organizational centres spread all over Northern India, the *Wahhabi* leaders exercised a moral influence on the Muslim intelligentsia throughout the country, and aroused the Muslim masses to free themselves both from the political tyranny of the British and the Muslim oppressors, as well as from the economic exploitation of Indian vested interests.⁹ Unlike the generality of the *ulema* and most of the *Sufis*, Sayyid Ahmad chose as his sphere of operation, not the spiritual or intellectual life, but the Muslim masses in general whom he contacted in cities, towns and villages during his tours and travels. Towards the end of 1820, Sayyid Ahmad arrived in Calcutta and 'met with great success as a teacher. The people of Calcutta and Barasat flocked to him in numbers. Among those who became his disciples was Titu Mir who afterwards, in 1831, raised the standard of revolt in Barasat.'¹⁰ The British in the beginning were almost anxious to encourage and support Sayyid Ahmad in his professed object of fighting the Sikhs on account of the alleged suppression of Islam in Ranjit Singh's domains.¹¹ But later there was a reversal in bureaucratic attitudes as the anti-British aspect of the movement became increasingly manifest. At length the 'long contemplated' clash of arms with the British took place in the battle of Balakot (May, 1831) which ended in a defeat for the *jihadees* and the death of Sayyid Ahmad.

Contemporary with Sayyid Ahmad Bareilly, the rise of religious reform movements amongst the Muslims of Bengal during the nineteenth century, was the local manifestation of the revivalist tendency that was generally felt throughout this

sub-continent. Collectively called the *Faraizi* set for their insistence on the performance of *faraiz*, i.e., obligatory duties enjoined by the *Quran*, this movement in the hands of a few devoted local reformers and scholars in Eastern Bengal, arose independently of the reformist trend of Shah Wali-Ullah, but was inspired and greatly influenced by the *Wahhabi* reforms of Arabia. Before going into the details of this complex socio-religious movement which acquired a radical politico-economic character, it is necessary to study the interplay of certain factors peculiar to Bengal, which explain why and how the reformist doctrines gained such a tremendous popularity and response in the remote corners of rural Bengal.

The mass of the population of Eastern Bengal, Hindus and Muhammadans alike, were so steeped in ignorance, that they respectively repeated their *mantra* and their *namaz* without understanding a word of it; and the reason usually given for their particular faith was ever the same: 'Our fathers were Hindus (or Muhammadans), hence we must be.' The dual objectives of the revivalist movement in arousing a religious consciousness, and denuding Islam of all Hindu influences were bound to be more appealing to a community, who 'unable generally to read their own vernacular, much less Arabic', were as ignorant of the *Quran* as the *Sudras* were of the *Vedas*. Moreover, a strong feeling of resentment against the *sahibs* filtrated in the distant villages of Bengal where the Muslims in particular were constantly taught to regard their European masters as *kaffers*, 'long after the same feelings had evaporated from the minds of the more equable Hindoo'. The resentment might perhaps have died out but for the religio-economic character given to it by the fanatical members of the sect. The followers of the Prophet were reminded that the hated oppressors were the enemies of Islam, who had not only usurped the sovereignty of the country, but were also exploiting the Muslim peasantry in collusion with the Hindu landlords, and therefore *jihad* to them was the sacred duty of all true believers.

The fact that these reformist doctrines were preached in the language of the masses and through Muslim Bengali polemical literature explains in a large measure their popularity. For example, the formula of repentance (a principle of the *Faraizi* sect as preached by Shariat Allah) was couched in the Bengali

language for the convenience of the ignorant masses.¹² One of the most active supporters of the Patna conspirators in Eastern Bengal, Haji Badruddin of Dacca, compiled *Fatwas* (canonical decrees) on different religious subjects in Bengali verse, 'admirably adapted to attract an ignorant Bengali.'¹³ As a matter of fact, from the beginning of the thirteenth century, with the establishment of Muslim rule in Bengal, there gradually developed a Muslim Bengali literature, rich in Arabic and Persian loan words displacing the older vocabulary of Sanskrit origin and accepting 'without any inhibition the Arabic and Persian heritage of Muslim culture'. A more significant development about the sixteenth century was the realization of the necessity of carrying the message of the Prophet to the masses in their own language. About the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries the Bengali Muslims organized a literary movement under Sāyyid Sultan to write in Bengali (as most Bengalis did not understand Arabic) about the lives of the Prophet and the saints. He wrote the *Nobi-Vamsa* to educate the ignorant masses in the essentials of Islam.¹⁴ This new trend lent an impetus to the religious consciousness of the Bengali Muslim masses.

In seeking to explain the hold of the revivalist leaders on the minds of their followers drawn from the lower orders of society, it should be borne in mind that these ignorant and uninformed people could be more easily convinced by the preachings of the missionaries. Living in the backward areas, deprived of any facilities for self-education, dissatisfied with the existing orders of society, and finding no way out of their miseries, they naturally became easy converts to the social and political doctrines preached in the name of religion. 'This was particularly the case in Bengal, where the majority of the Muslims lived in the backward eastern districts, where the facilities for education were not offered by the Government till very late.'¹⁵ The consequence of this neglect on the part of the Government was to leave the masses in the hands of conservative and half-educated priests. The Muslim masses, already superstitious and credulous, needed little to make them staunch and devoted members of a religious movement. The degenerate condition of the Muslims of Eastern Bengal could be greatly attributed to the growth of *mullaism* or priestly

influence. These deltaic Muslims, hopelessly backward in intellectual, moral and social attainments, blindly followed the *mullahs*, whose teachings comprised of nothing but 'a pack of most rotten prejudices, which have nothing to do with the real truth of the great religion of Islam.'¹⁶ Their preachings consisted of admonishing people and telling them to stick to Arabic education and abstain from learning English, and also appealing to them to found *madrassahs*. When the neighbouring villagers got tired of a *mullah* or somebody else stepped in, he changed the scene of his games, hired a boat and with a sufficient number of retainers shifted like an itinerant pedagogue from one place to another for months together and went on collecting money and disciples. 'Every village in Eastern Bengal had half a dozen *Mullahs*, and every *Mullah* had at least twenty pupils whom he taught theology, thereby making that province one of their biggest fields of operation in India.'¹⁷ In upper India and in the Western Provinces, the shell of *mullaism* was broken by Sir Syed, the Great Patriarch of the Muslims, whose noble efforts were attempted to be frustrated by the former. In western Bengal and Bihar, Nawab Abdul Latif and Maulavi Obaidullah Ohaidee did much good in rescuing their community from the stronghold of the *mullahs*. But nobody came to the rescue of eastern Bengal which remained under their sway. Muslim leaders of repute, who had the amelioration of their people at heart and had made considerable strides in that direction, unfortunately failed to foresee the supreme necessity of a *drang nach osten* in order to relieve the masses of the eastern region from a state of miserable backwardness and an apathy and averseness which were the net effects of the negative teachings of fanatical priests. The articulate *bourgeois* intelligentsia left the tradition-bound rural poor disoriented in the face of crisis, with the result that the latter responded readily to the millenarian appeals of a reactionary movement. It was on ready manured soil of this description that the *Faraizi* leaders cast their seeds, and reaped an ample harvest of crescentaders (*jihadees*) for the conversion of India into a *Dar-ul-Islam* (Land of Islam).

The *Faraizi* movement founded by Haji Shariat Allah (1781-1840), a Bengali Muslim belonging to a petty *taludkar* family of Madaripur subdivision (now in the Faridpur division

of Bangladesh), was the earliest and foremost of Muslim religious reform movements in Bengal. In 1799, Shariat Allah made a pilgrimage to Mecca where 'he had the unique opportunity to watch the progress of the *Wahhabi* movement of Arabia from close quarters, specially from 1803 when Makkah was occupied by the *Wahhabis*'.¹⁸ On his return home, he started the *Faraizi* movement in 1818 with a view to remodelling the Muslim way of life in accordance with the original doctrines of Islam, condemning all deviations as polytheism (*Shirk*) or sinful innovation (*Bid'ah*). Reporting on the sect to the Government of Bengal, Dampier, Superintendent of Police, remarked that the 'Ferazies were noted as professing to retain only the pure doctrines of the Koran. They asserted complete equality among themselves and the sect was confined to the lower classes. They hung together and supported each other in difficulties, looking on the cause of the highest as that of the lowest and of the whole sect; nothing being considered criminal, if done in behalf of a brother in distress'.¹⁹ What especially distinguished the *Faraizi* movement from the revivalist movements of the time was its suspension of the congregational prayers of Friday and *Id* in British India which was considered to be a *Dar-ul-harb* (Land of the enemy).

The *Faraizis*, however, did not share the dangerous political views of the *Wahhabis*. While the *Wahhabis* openly preached and carried on *jihād* against the British rule in the North-Western Frontier, the *Faraizis* preached passive non-cooperation with the Government organs. The movement gradually acquired an agrarian character and spread in a very short time particularly in the eastern districts of the 24-Parganas, Barasat, Jessore, Pabna, Malda, Faridpur, Dacca, Chittagong and Barisal, 'and it is from these parts that the majority of recruits was obtained for Jihad on the North-Western Frontier'.²⁰ The new creed of social equality which 'bound the Muhammadan peasantry together as one man', naturally alarmed the *zamin-dars*, who persecuted the Haji. However, with prudence and caution the latter continued his reformist movement till his death. 'A vast majority of the uneducated and most excitable classes' of Muslims joined his fold. His orders were implicitly obeyed, and his influence was unbounded. 'The *Faraizis* were very strict in adhering to the commands of God and were

stricter in morals than other Muslims.' Though contemporaries, Shariat Allah and Sayyid Ahmad Shahid preached independently, but the success of the former's mission paved the way for the latter.²¹

Shariat Allah's son, Dudu Miyan (1819-62), followed the military campaign of Sayyid Ahmad Bareilly against the Sikhs in 1831 with his own independent, though unsuccessful, action against the soldiers of the East India Company in Barasat. Although the doctrine of the suspension of *Juma* and *Id* prayers implied that Bengal was a *Dar-ul-harb*, Shariat Allah never openly preached *jihād* against the British, but concentrated on his mission of religious purification. Dudu Miyan, however, continued his father's work, but by preaching more revolutionary doctrines transformed the sect from a predominantly socio-religious to a politico-economic body. There was a general feeling at that time that 'the real object of the *Faraizis* was the expulsion of the alien rulers and the restoration of Mohammedan power'. This significant observation was later made by Dampier to the Government of Bengal, and was, in any case, confirmed by the open anti-British activities of Dudu Miyan.²²

The most remarkable advance made by Dudu Miyan was the organization of a society, the formation of a well-knit fraternity with agents to look after its activities at different places. This was a logical outcome of his father's work. In the absence of a legitimately recognized Muslim Government in Bengal, he tried to set up a community capable of discharging some of the essential functions of a communal life. He had a two-fold aim: 'to protect the *Faraizi* peasantry from Hindu *zamindars* and European indigo-planters, he raised a volunteer body *lathials* for affray parties. To secure social justice for the Muslims, he revived the traditional *panchayat* system. These two branches (*siyasi* and *din*) were co-ordinated by an hierarchical *Khilafat* system under the direct control of the *Ustad*.²³ The duties of the *Khalifas* (deputies) were to keep the sect together, to make proselytes, to gather contributions from members and finally to promote the aims of the central association. Dudu Miyan thought that there was no sin in persecuting those who refused to embrace his doctrines or who appealed to Government courts against the orders of the

society and its acknowledged leaders.²⁴ 'A dangerous intriguer' as considered by Dampier, Dudu Miyan became notorious for his power and turbulence, and was held in dread by the peaceable. He took the 'most determined stand', against the long-standing practice of the landlords of levying illegal cesses (23 in number) on the Muslim ryots for Durga Puja and other Hindu rites, which (though sanctioned by antiquity or adaptation to feelings) were denounced as intolerable acts of oppression'. As the supporters of the *Faraizi* movement were mostly depressed Muslim cultivators, Dudu Miyan proceeded further, and declared that as the earth belonged to God, none could claim it as inheritance or levy taxes on it. Hence he regarded the exploitation of the peasantry by the *zamindars* as injustice (*zulm*) and persuaded the peasants to settle on Government-managed *khas mahals* in order to escape from all taxes except the land revenue. He thus inevitably came into conflict with the Hindu and Muslim landed aristocracy and the British planters in the districts of the 24-Parganas, Nadia and Faridpur. Many of the ryots of the local *zamindars* and the tenants of Dunlop, the local Indigo-planter, went over to his side.²⁵ While Dudu Miyan tried to compel all the Muslim peasants to join his fold on pain of beating, excommunication or destruction of their crops, the *zamindars* tried to prevent such recruitment through infliction of painful torture. But coercion failed to halt the movement.²⁶ The high-handed action of the *zamindars* only intensified the struggle and the economic relief which the movement promised, reinforced combination and helped the sect to develop a fanatical and exclusive character. This explains why it was among the cultivators or landless labourers, that Dudu Miyan gained the largest number of converts,²⁷ and his name became a house-hold word throughout the districts of East Bengal and also in some areas of West Bengal. The British administration in Bengal sought to hold the balance in favour of the landlords, by trying to enforce the law and order of the status quo. Several attempts to convict Dudu Miyan failed because witnesses refused to give evidence against him or any *Faraizi* prisoner. At length, in 1857, when the news of the Delhi uprising arrived, he was arrested and taken into custody. With his death at Dacca in September 1862, ended the vigour of the movement, 'possibly through the introduction of tenancy

legislation and partly through the controversy aroused among Muslims by the *Faraizi* refusal to say the *juma* and *id* prayers.²⁸ Thereafter followed a crisis in the history of the *Faraizi* movement which, after effecting some permanent changes in the religious life of Bengal for nearly half of a century, gradually began to decline in importance. The movement was carried on by the three sons of Dudu Miyan, but paradoxically enough the youngest son of Dudu Miyan, a *jihadee*, was conferred the title of Khan Bahadur a generation later, by the *Kafer Sahebs* as a reward for his policy of co-operation with the British Government.

The most violent of these Bengali reformist movements, however, was that led by Mir Nithar Ali *alias* Titu Mir (1782-1831). Born in Chandpur in the Barasat district, Titu was the son of a 'respectable husbandman' and bettered his position by marrying into the family of a small landholder. In Government records Titu Mir figured as 'a bad and desperate character who lived the life of a professional wrestler in Calcutta. Ironically enough, Titu's early career was spent in service under the Hindu *zamin্দars* of Nadia who needed a determined character either to create disturbances or to exact dues from their *ryots*. His role in an affray led to imprisonment. But by 1827 Titu, a disciple of Sayyid Ahmad Bareilly, had started a campaign in favour of a purified Islam among the peasants and artisans in the villages of West Bengal. This movement practically synchronized with that of the *Faraizis* in East Bengal and was a compound of religious reform, agrarian insurrection and defiance of the British Government. Though Titu Mir's ideas of religious reforms were similar to those of Haji Shariat Allah and of Sayyid Ahmad Bareilly, there were certain doctrinal and basic differences between the former and the *Faraizis*. Unlike the latter, Titu Mir and his followers attended the Friday and *Id* prayers. While Shariat Allah got his inspiration from Arabia, Titu's reforms were an extension of the programme of Shah Walli-Ullah and Sayyid Ahmad for West Bengal.²⁹

Titu Mir was not merely a religious reformer. He soon became the leader of 'an infuriated peasant rising'. His followers were recruited from the poor and illiterate Muslims, and were more numerous and powerful in the three districts of 24-

Parganas, Nadia and Faridpur. The sect was 'much disliked and feared, chiefly owing to the strong clanship which led them to combine and resist the extortionate demands by zamindars.³⁰ The extensive powers which the *zamindars* enjoyed made it easy for them, in co-operation with non-*Faraizi* Muslim tenants to harass the followers of the sect.³¹ Ram Narayan of Tara-goonia, Gour Prosad Chowdhury of Nagarpur, agent of the *zamindar* of Koorgatchy and Kishen Deb Roy of Purwa were alarmed at the potential threat to their interests, and on getting complaints, used their powers and influence to interfere and discourage the sect by imposing fines (e.g. illegal beard tax) or by inflicting petty kinds of maltreatment on peasants and weavers of the new set.³² Eventually a mosque was burnt. A spirit of revenge incited the followers of Titu to commit acts of open violence in a series of agrarian outrages. The enquiring officer J. R. Colvin concluded that 'they saw reason from whatever cause to be disappointed in their object of appealing the case and to this disappointment acting on irritated and fanatical feelings' must be attributed 'the design suddenly formed and carried into execution of proceeding to extremities by retaliating not only on one Hindu *zamindar* with whom there was the immediate quarrel but by acts of outrage towards the Hindoo community in general'.³³ A series of outrages followed, the general pattern being to kill a cow in a Hindu village, and if the people resisted, to murder or expel the inhabitants, plunder their houses, and burn them down. 'They were equally bitter, however, against any Muhammadan who would not join their sect, and on one occasion, in sacking the house of a wealthy and obdurate Musalman, varied the proceedings by forcibly marrying his daughter to the head of their band'.³⁴ Emboldened by their successes, Titu and his followers proclaimed the extinction of English rule and re-establishment of Muhammadan power. The village of Narkulbaria became the head-quarters of the insurgents. About 1829-30 Titu Mir was joined by Miskin Shah, a *faqir* hailing from the Punjab who, it was said, was the instigator of the rising.³⁵ After several districts of West Bengal had become virtually a battleground between the *zamindars* and the followers of Titu, 'the British authorities were obliged to despatch a regiment of native infantry to deal with what

had become a *jacquerie*.³⁶ In November 1831, Titu Mir along with fifty of his followers were killed, fighting the British, and another three hundred and fifty were arrested. 'Muslim agrarian revolt in West Bengal was thus sunffed out.' A sect founded by Tipu Pagla of Letia-kanda in the Susung Pargana was active at the time Titu Mir carried out his movement. Tipu Pagla preached the equality of men and exhorted upon his followers not to obey the rich nor to pay rent to the *zamindars*. In 1824 the followers of Tipu rose in a rebellion that was suppressed by the Government. The above account was published in the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* of 1873 by Hara-chandra Chaudhury who remarked that Tipu Pagla might be called the Louis Blanc of Eastern Bengal.³⁷

Sayyid Ahmad had established a strong organization in Bihar with Wilayat Ali as his chief *Khalifah* (1820). It is difficult to ascertain whether he contemplated the setting up of any such organization in Bengal,³⁸ though he addressed a letter to his followers in Bengal urging them to join him with men and money at Balakot.³⁹ The *Wahhabis* were sometimes obliged to send recruits and funds over distances of two thousand miles all along the route from Bengal to Sittana. Their organizational centre was in Patna in Bihar. Bengal supplied men, money and resources for the movement of the north-west. When Sayyid Ahmad and Ismail were killed at Balakot, Maulavi Wilayat Ali was elected the chief leader of the *Tariqat-i-Muhammadiyah* movement at Patna, and his younger brother, Maulavi Enayat Ali, was sent to Bengal to take up the unfinished work of Titu Mir. Soon there came about a split between the Patna Khalifs and Maulavi Karamat Ali (1800-1873), an eminent disciple of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid. Thenceforth, the latter's group came to be known as *Ta'aisyuni*, especially in Bengal, which became the field of his mission from 1835. Maulavi Karamat Ali stood for moderation and detested the radical approaches of the Patna school, the *Ahl-i-Hadith* and the *Faraizi* on the one hand, and denounced the superstitious practices of the traditional society on the other. Amongst the Muslim theologians he appeared to be the first to realize the futility of militant opposition to the British rule. He even collaborated in his later life with the father of Muslim modernism in Bengal, Nawab Abdul Latif, in pleading for loyalty



to the established Government and for reconciliation between the rulers and the ruled. The influence of the *Tariqat-i-Maham-madiyah* movement which had reached Bengal in 1820 with Sayyid Ahmad's visit to Calcutta, continued to be felt down to the sixties of the nineteenth century.

This hostile band of Hindustani and Bengali fanatics which cost the British Government so much trouble, treasure and blood, had 'under the very nose and protection of Government and authorities openly preached sedition in every village' in the most populous districts, unsettling the minds of the Muslim population and 'obtaining an influence for evil as extraordinary as it is certain'.⁴⁰ The potential dangers inherent in such movements of reaction and revivalism appeared in the beginning less abhorrent than aberrant to the district authorities who considered them either to be 'local' or engineered by 'unimportant' men. But O'Kinealy, Magistrate of Mymensingh, sharply commented on the inexplicable apathy of the Government towards these movements. The contemporary Hindu press sounded a note of caution by suggesting that 'such sects as the Faraizis and Wahabis, even if impotent themselves for a great Movement, may gather all the discontents, hatreds, ambitions which under the present not very wise, however, beneficent and brilliant, rule, must be numerous enough. The Faraizis, though a Bengal sect, are heard of outside in the Native states. There are scores of villages in Bengal but the Government and the public alike are quite in dark as to them or their organization, their politics or their religions. This bespeaks of a great neglect'.⁴¹ As a matter of fact, as late as 1868, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir William Grey, frankly confessed in a letter to the Governor-General Sir John Lawrence (dated 2 June 1868, Belvedere, Alipore): 'This is the first time that I recollect to have heard that they (Ferazees) were supposed to be assisting a general movement in the West....I do not remember to have heard until now that there was supposed to be a connection between the Mahomedan frontiers of Bengal proper, and the West....The notion hitherto, I think, had been that our danger consisted in the possible getting up of serious local agrarian riots—one of the old tenets of the Ferazees in Furreedpur, Backergunge and other Districts being that landed proprietors had no right to take rents...'⁴²

Towards the end of the year 1863 the *authorities* discovered an extensively ramified conspiracy, with its centre at Patna which had for its object the supply of men and money to the Muslim fanatics at Mulka Sittana, who took up arms against the British Government.⁴³ Funds appear to have been liberally provided by the Muhammadan population of Bengal, it being held by all followers of the sect as a sacred duty to put aside a percentage from the profits of their business for *jihad*. During the Wahabi State trials it transpired that Bogra and Malda, specially the former, supplied most of the Bengali recruits. Collections of money to a considerable amount were made in Bogra and not a few men of position were and still are, Wahabis in this district.⁴⁴ Two of the most active agents of the *Wahhabis* through whom money transactions to a large amount had been carried on were Haji Buderoodeen, a wealthy hide merchant of Dacca,⁴⁵ and Ameer Khan of Colootolah, a banker in Calcutta. Along with the former, Maulavi Abdool Jubbar of Calcutta, were the 'most dangerous members of the sect' whose proceedings, warned the Magistrate of Patna, needed to be specially watched. Among the other active collectors of money in Bengal were shopkeepers engaged in the silk trade, and some merchants of Calcutta who had business houses in Patna, including a *mookhtar* of the Calcutta High Court.

A 'religious Jacquerie of this sort' did not find favour with 'the fundholding community', or with any section of the comfortable classes. In Bengal, however, one entire trade, and a very rich and powerful one, had been steadily on their side. The Muhammadans knew nothing of the scruples which so powerfully influenced the Hindus with regard to trafficking in the skin of the cow, their sacred animal. Thus the wholesale hide trade had fallen into the hands of the Muslim merchants who composed one of the richest classes of the native mercantile community. The abhorrence of the Hindu community for this particular trade and its traders was paid 'back in kind.' In the opinion of Hunter, the Muhammadan hide merchants accordingly formed 'the wealthiest and most powerful contributors to the Wahabi sect, whose very *raison d'être* is to wage war upon the Unbeliever.'⁴⁶ But it was not to any single class, however rich or powerful, that the *Wahhabis* owed their

strength. 'They appealed boldly to the masses, and their system whether of religion or of politics', was 'eminently adapted to the hopes and fears of a restless populace. Among them were thousands of sincerely pious men', who gave 'a respectability, and almost a sanction, to the worldly-minded majority'.⁴⁷

Notwithstanding the events of the mutiny which would have taught less bigoted men the hopelessness of any attempt to subvert our Government', remarked Ravenshaw (who was commissioned to make an exhaustive enquiry in 1865), 'the Patna Members appear to have redoubled their exertions and brought about the frontier war towards the end of 1863. But it was from the arrest of some Bengalee fugitives from the Mulka-Sittana Colony that information was obtained which led to the Wahhabi prosecutions at Umballa in 1864'.⁴⁸ This apart, there were numerous other instances of Muslim opposition to the reformist movement. The evidence recorded at Malda for example showed that there were some Muhammadans in the district who had resisted the movement, the most conspicuous amongst them being Adalat Mandal of Kalinagar. A strict orthodox Muhammadan of the old school, he went before the magistrate of Malda and charged Habilas Mandal with collecting money for seditious purposes after the latter had converted his son.⁴⁹ The list of persons who had rendered special assistance in the inquiries in Malda gave sixteen names and all were Muhammadans.⁵⁰ Thousands of quiet villagers from Eastern Bengal, where the followers of the *Faraizi* sect were most numerous and powerful, had flocked to Patna, whence they were sent forward in bands of eight or ten through Umballa to the Mulka Sittana Hills. The latter returned deluded with their religious zeal 'considerably cooled by the snow and the hardships they have experienced (which) served to open to the eyes of the people, and a sect has sprung up the leaders of which teach that contributions to *Jihad* are an imposition and that charity and prayers are all that are required of our orthodox Mohammedans'.⁵¹ The Muhammadan maulavis were ever ready to take advantage of any excitement to work on the feeling of their followers against the Government. 'I have been surprized to find', wrote Syed Ameer Hossain, a respectable Muslim in Government service (Personnel Assistant to the Commissioner of Bhagalpur, 'that the doctrines of Jihad as

prescribed by the Muhammadan law has (*sic*) so egregiously been misinterpreted by these half-educated Wahabee Maulavees who have turned it into account and found it a well-paying profession to mislead and beguile their credulous and ignorant dupes, especially those inhabiting the districts of Bengal into yielding to their mischievous and wicked preachings'.⁵² Enquiries ordered by the Bengal Government through the Detective Department proved that in several districts of Bengal and *Bihar* the Muslims belonging to the *Wahhabi* or *Faraizi* sects were led by the 'seditious preachings of these *soidisant* half-educated Maulavees, into a belief that there is a Jihad on foot on the frontier and that every good and pious Mahammadan is bound by the doctrines of the (*sic*) Islam to join it or to assist in its cause',⁵³ by rendering financial help which was to be remitted to the frontier. 'It is needless to say that a great portion of this ill-gotten gain has found place into the coffers of these rascally Maulavees. Some might have reached Sittana and other colonies of the Indian Wahabbes.'⁵⁴ Instances of exercising some degree of pressure by putting out of caste those who refused to subscribe to the 'Jihad Fund' are to be found in official records. In fact, were it not for the pains and penalties attached to the fiat of excommunication, or the threat to outcaste proclaimed leaders like Ibrahim Mandal (head-centre of the movement in Rajmahal District within the Santhal Parganas), the movement would have died out long ago.⁵⁵

From his experience in the districts of Jessore, Faridpur and Bakharganj, J. H. Reily, Special Superintendent of the Detective Police, wrote in 1864 to the Inspector General of Police, Lower Provinces, that he was 'convinced that the Muhammadan population in these Districts will never be reconciled to the British *raj*'. The people tended to look forward to the appearance of a messiah who would exterminate all unbelievers, and restore the empire to the faithful. The feeling prevailed extensively and was 'principally kept alive by *hajeess* or pilgrims, who returned annually from Mecca with feelings of intense hatred to the British rule'.⁵⁶ Though Reily was convinced that the Government had 'little to fear from such petty conspiracies,' yet he felt that 'the Muhammadan population should be taught that they will not be permitted to carry on such treasonable proceeding with impunity'. He suggested

therefore that the police throughout the country be directed to keep an index of the Muhammadan population in the different districts in Bengal.⁵⁷ The absence of Perasian and Arabic schools in the Muhammadan districts led the Muhammadan youths to leave their homes and travel long distances to learn their classical languages and attach themselves to maulavis 'who too often taught them disloyalty to the British rulers of the country'. As a matter of fact, wherever the movement penetrated 'the education of the young has generally been one of the primary objects of this sect. Like the Jesuits they are fully alive to the manifest advantages of securing to themselves the training of the rising generation'.⁵⁸ Scattered throughout the country were the *Naibs* or Deputy *Qazis*, who watched over the spiritual welfare of the masses, instructed them in the faith, and suppressed dissent, or any expression of independent thought. Their treatment of backsliders or renegades was most summary in nature. The fact that this was the law must have had a most wholesome effect in preventing the promulgation of any new doctrines and in keeping all united in the bonds of a common faith. When the East India Company decided to stand forth as the *Dewan* in 1765, a great change took place. The *Qazis* still survived, deprived of power, but no longer a terror to the evil-doers. They became judicial officers without any authority as religious instructors or arbitrators. *Pirs*, *Fakirs*, and *Khundkars* abounded, but their influence was confined within a limited circle of disciples and did not extend to the densely populated villages of the interior. Left with no other means of livelihood, and embittered against the existing order of things, these 'zealous, partially instructed men of letters' went about 'preaching among ignorant Muhammadan population, apostles of disloyalty'.⁵⁹ For three generations or 55 years the Mussulmans of Eastern Bengal being without a shepherd receded more and more from their national faith and conformed to many superstitious rites of the Hindus.⁶⁰ In view of these circumstances Reilly remarked: 'It is in districts like Maldah and Backergunge where the Muhammadan ryots are rich that they find time to indulge in fanaticism.... The police, however, can do but little. There must be a radical change in the feelings of the Muhammadans. The education of the lower classes appears the only safe pre-

ventive measure the Government can adopt; there is no doubt that ignorance is the chief cause of credulity.... A serious responsibility rests on the Government to attempt the education of the Muhammadan population in the villages through the medium of the Arabic language, for they appear to have a strong prejudice against learning the language of the idolatrous Hindoo, and that of the *Kaffir* English. The old system of *kazees* may be revived by granting them *sunnuds* of appointment from Government officers, and assigning them defined jurisdictions.... I have long felt some arrangement of this kind would prevent a great deal of dissatisfaction that now unfortunately exists amongst the Muhammadans.⁶¹

Contemporary reactions to these nineteenth century fundamentalist movements are illustrative of the fact that in their social, religious, economic and political aspects, the *Wahhabi* and *Faraizi* movements failed to appeal generally to the Muslim elite in the urban areas, precisely for the same reasons as made them popular with the ignorant and easily excitable classes of rural Muslim. Not all sections of the Muhammadan populace, however, were well-disposed towards the *Wahhabis* whose presence in the districts was a standing menace to all classes, whether Muslim or Hindu, enjoying social status and economic privileges. Thus along with the British bureaucracy and the Hindu landed aristocracy, the traditional Muslim society of India which shared a common dread of change, reacted sharply against the puritan revivalism of the nineteenth century. The traits of the traditional Muslim society had survived in the practice of the *Sabiqis* ('the followers of the ancestral customs') alone. According to James Wise, the *Sabiqis* consisted of the majority of the landed gentry and with few exceptions, the descendants of the old families, who may be called the conservatives representing 'the debased Hinduised religion peculiar to Muhammadan India'.⁶² Their social order was the oldest, the most corrupt, 'which until recently represented the dominant state religion',⁶³ and bore the brunt of Haji Shariat Allah's attack against un-Islamic practices. Any form of dissent, whether religious or political, was perilous to the vested interests of the *Sabiqis*, who naturally resented the *Wahhabis* who were extreme dissenters in both respects. Moreover the theory implicit in the *Quran* of

the superiority of the Muslims to the non-Muslims developed a mental attitude that made the more respectable sections of the community look down upon the lower classes of Muslims, mainly composed of local converts. The Muslim upper classes, particularly the Sayyids, because of their connection with the family of the Prophet (in whatever walk of life they may be), were generally respected by their co-religionists, though in theory the former had no legal claim to superiority like the Brahmins among the Hindus.⁶⁴ The *Faraizi* doctrine of complete equality, which taught its followers not to show any outward form of respect to social superiors, helped to eliminate to a certain extent class distinctions within the Muslim society, and was not likely to be supported by the Muslim elite who were used to veneration by the lower classes. It was also significant that the *Wahhabis* considered all time-honoured illegal cesses and impositions on petty traders, *ryots* and artisans as opposed to the letter and spirit of Islam. They openly censured the local officials, including the *Kazis* and *Kotwals*, for their extortionate demands. Their followers went about openly preaching that all acts of an oppressor and a tyrant were to be resisted.

On the economic level the *Faraizi* movement which 'bound the Muslim peasantry together as one man' to resist the oppressive demands of the landlords, by employing terror tactics if necessary, naturally alarmed the landlords as a class whether Hindu or Muslim. One of the chief inducements held out to a Muhammadan *ryot* for subscribing to the *jihad* (independent of the reward hereafter), was the privilege of holding his lands free of rent on the restoration of the rule of Islam. It was not likely that the *zamindars* would support such a movement. Despite the common bonds of religion, this clash of class interests must have affected the *Sabiqi* Muslim, a large majority of whom were *zamindars* and the landed gentry, who exploited their Muslim *ryots* with no less impunity than their Hindu counterparts. 'Perhaps, an exception to the rule was the presence in the ranks of the reformists, of a few prosperous middle-ranking Muslim land-owners, the *jotedars* and the like, men who had "a local influence" and were "recognized by the moulvies as leaders of the rural society". But they must have had their own personal motives to join

the movement'.⁶⁵ Interesting examples of two opulent and bigoted *zamindars* supporting the movement were Nababjan of Behar who had extensive property in that neighbourhood and Baboo Chowdhury of Bangdangah who owned valuable property in Malda and Murshidabad.⁶⁶

The political aims of the *Faraizis* and the *Wahhabis* to convert India into a *Dar-ul-Islam* (land of Islam) by extirpating British rule, were initially dear to all Muhammadans who sighed for their lost dominion, and 'believed in the duty of war against the Christian or Hindu, Jew or Buddhist'.⁶⁷ The Muslim aristocrats of Bengal had looked at the Wahhabi bravado with admiration or indifference'.⁶⁸ But the Revolt of 1857 and the resumption of *Wahhabi* activities which brought about the frontier war in the latter half of 1863 hardened the Government's attitude towards the Muslims. In the United Provinces which had been the main battleground of the Revolt, the *Wahhabis* could not flourish, and the Muslims were offered Government jobs, the knowledge of English not being insisted upon in their case. But in Bengal, where almost every Muslim was a suspect or a rebel, bureaucratic discrimination against the Muslims as a class was vigorously applied.⁶⁹ The realization at length dawned on the Muslim aristocrats and the bourgeois intelligentsia 'that the rebellion had completed their ruin, they had quite forfeited the confidence of their foreign rulers'. They looked with dismay at the reversed order of things where the Hindus monopolized Government education and service. The net result of these developments was an attitude of disillusionment and a psychology of defeatism and insecurity, which gradually bred grievance, antipathy and opposition. Deriving their inspiration from western progressivism, Muslim modernists like Nawab Abdul Latif in Bengal and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in the North-Western Provinces took their stand firmly on a rational understanding and interpretation of the *Quran*, and set the Muslims on a path of loyalism and educational and social reform as the only means of survival in a new situation with a new value structure. This modernist movement appealed to the educated minority of the urban centres, and could gain ground only when the revivalist movements were well on their way out. It may be interesting to note in this connection that even Sir Syed had not in his early career

escaped the magnetic appeal of the *Wahhabi* demand for *jihād*.⁷⁰ But the Mahomedan Literary Society founded in Calcutta during the *Wahhabi* trials of 1863 by Nawab Abdul Latif represented the first organized institutional opposition to the *Wahhabi* agitation. A pro-British organization, it supported the favourable interpretation that India was not a *Dar-ul-harb*. Sir Syed also participated in the discussions and in a letter dated 14 April 1871 wrote that 'the Mohammedans, be they dwellers in *Dar-ul-Harb* or *Dar-ul-Islam*, are prohibited from rebellion against a government which interferes in no way with the free worship of their religion'.⁷¹

The nineteenth century Islamic revivalist movements represented an atavistic throwback in the face of contemporary forces of modernism and progress. 'Back to the *Quran*' or 'the example of the Prophet' were the clarion calls given by the crescentaders of Islam. Retaliation against the past injustices committed by the Sikhs, the radical alternative of establishing a *Dar-ul-harb*, and a mighty economic upsurge of the oppressed peasantry of Bengal against the European planters and the Hindu and Muslim landlords, were some of the essential religio-social, economic and communal features of this very complex movement initiated by a few earnest and untitled men. It was all the more remarkable that these revivalist movements, opposed by the *Sabiqi* Muslims, suspected by and positively antagonistic to the Hindu landed aristocracy in the main, unsupported by the richer classes of Muslims and ultimately annihilated by British military intervention and prolonged legal proceedings, spread far and wide from a remote Bengal village to the fanatical 'Rebel Colony' of Mulka-Sittana in the north-western extremity of the subcontinent. These movements were destined to influence in a great measure the subsequent development of the Bengali Muslim community.

A proper assessment of this 'many-sided affair' would reveal that these nineteenth century fundamentalist movements were 'not purely agencies for religious reform'. They afforded the rural Muslims 'a forum for expression of socio-economic grievances', and a 'voice in politics'. And lastly, they contributed directly or indirectly to the growth of 'a distinct and exclusive identity' among the non-elite Muslim population of Bengal.⁷²

By his life-long mission Haji Shariat Allah revived Islam in Bengal from its stupor and succeeded in awakening a spiritual consciousness among the masses. That 'the apathetic careless Bengali peasant should be roused into enthusiasm' was a remarkable testimony to the preachings of a man who came of obscure parentage amidst the swamps of eastern Bengal. With the growth of a civic and corporate spirit with 'the village mosque under its *Imam*' as its centre, and a new spirit of self-respect, the *Faraizis* became very strict in adhering to the commands of God and in denouncing all polytheistic and un-Islamic practices. The legacy of this religious revivalism was evidenced in later years by a movement noticeable among the Indian Muslims towards a religious life more strictly in accordance with the laws of Islam. Its inspiration was used in the second half of the nineteenth century which witnessed a great revival of missionary activity 'directed towards counteracting the anti-Islamic tendencies of the instruction given by Christian missionaries and the preachers of the Arya Samaj'.⁷³ In one sense, however, the movement of the fanatical reformers had from the beginning little chance of success. It was an attempt to strike twelve centuries out of the world's history and compel a foreign race to conform to the habits and customs of the Arabians in the time of Muhammad.⁷⁴ The Islamic reformation movements did not result in the establishment of religious peace or unity in the land. On the one hand, even the vigour of the revivalist movements did not succeed in wiping out the vestiges of un-Islamic practices and beliefs. Heresies and superstitions survived. On the other hand, internal differences between the religious reformers caused splits in the movements or ranged the different sects in hostile opposition to one another over doctrinal conflicts,⁷⁵ thereby militating against a united and cohesive development of the Muslim community. Thus the reform movements, instead of purifying Islam or uplifting the Muslims from their miseries, degenerated into violent and reactionary courses. As a result, the Muslims, especially of rural Bengal and Bihar, added to their existing poverty and ignorance, fanaticism and prejudice—two serious obstacles to the progress and development of any community.⁷⁶

On the social plane, the *Faraizis* denounced caste pre-

judices as a deadly sin, being contrary to the spirit of the *Quran*. So they emphasized the equality of all members of the reformed creed, and preached that it was not necessary to show outward forms of respect to the upper classes. This attracted the lower orders of the society, cultivators, weavers, oil-grinders etc. chiefly in the villages. An indirect effect of the spread of the new creed with its emphasis on the social equality of all members in a common Islamic brotherhood and the denunciation of exactions of all kinds proved to be strong incentives and powerful appeals to the simple and oppressed peasantry which could be organized towards a united peasant uprising.

On the economic plane, the *Faraizi* movement was 'the upsurge of suffering, impoverished, ruthlessly exploited Muslim peasantry,'⁷⁷ 'hounded and harassed by the double pronged depredations of an unscrupulous and exploiting planter's class and the newly created class of landed proprietors.'⁷⁸ The Permanent Settlement of 1793 had reduced the peasants (the majority of whom were Muslims) to the position of agricultural labourers, entirely at the mercy of the Hindu middlemen who had emerged as the newly created landlords. The latter had been enabled under the proprietary rights given to them by the Permanent Settlement to treat their tenants with impunity, 'to exercise a petty jurisdiction among the ryots and to make petty exactions on all kinds of pretexts'.⁷⁹ Under Shariat Allah, the movement had not acquired an economic character, although the doctrine of social equality, which had banded the Muslim peasantry together, naturally alarmed the *zamindars* who persecuted the *Haji*. Under Dudu Miyan, however, the sect assumed a deeper economic and political tinge, and 'the movement became the spear-head of the resistance of the Muslim peasantry of Eastern Bengal' against the Hindu landlords and European indigo-planters, who stood in mortal dread of them. Dudu Miyan organized the peasant riots in 1838, 1841, 1844 and 1846. Funds were liberally supplied to *Faraizi* victims of any *zamindar*, to enable them to assert their legal rights in the law courts. Compared to the *Faraizi* movement, the other and very similar Muslim peasant movement led in Bengal by Titu Mir was more militant in character. The petty oppressions, to which the Hindu landlord subjected his followers, placed him at the head

of 'an infuriated peasant rising'. Its retaliation against the Hindu landlords led to the proclamation that the British rule, which had created and was protecting that landlord, was extinct. Titu Mir and Shariat Allah came from the lower strata of the Muslims in Bengal, and were supported by the rural masses. 'Both the movements spread in areas where the Muslim peasants were oppressed by the Hindu zamindars.'⁸⁰ In the condition of Bengal under the Permanent Settlement, where the majority of *zamindars* were Hindus, 'the conflation of Muslim and of exploited tenant, of Hindu and exploiting landlord was inevitable, although, in fact, Muslim landlords treated their Muslim tenants no differently than did Hindu landlords.'⁸¹ In the south-eastern districts of the delta, where, as in most districts of Bengal proper, the agricultural *ryots* were chiefly Muhammadans, it was the fashion, whenever a landlord quarrelled with his tenants, to stigmatize the latter as *Faraizis* and to attribute to their conduct a political character. There was, however, no doubt that the people of these tidal districts were more hot-blooded than other Bengalis and more given to the use of arms. The *Faraizi* doctrines, which so many of them held could 'in the event of serious agrarian questions, form a bond and rallying cry among them', remarked the Lieutenant-Governor.⁸² Being thus united and conscious of their rights and strength, 'skilled in military organization and the use of arms', the Muhammadan *ryots* played a more prominent part than their Hindu counterparts in the indigo disturbances of 1860.⁸³ Men like Rafik Mandal of Narinepore and Ibrahim Mandal played an active role in opposing the exactions of the indigo planters by placing themselves at the head of the *jotes* or unions to oppose the common oppressor by force of arms. Reily believed, 'it was the successful opposition to the authority of the *Sahebs* that first taught the peasants of Bengal to know their strength. It is since that period that we hear of *jamaits* or assemblies and *jotes* or union. Before that time these terms were confined to the *Feragees* under Tetoo Mea, of Barasat, and the followers of Doodo Mea in Furreedpore and Backergunge when opposing exactions of Hindoo zamindars. It is very clear that since that time the *ryots* have learnt that union is strength, and having by this means successfully resisted

indigo oppression, and the subsequent attempts to enhance their rents, at exorbitant and penal rates, they have learnt to band together and make common cause against any act encroaching on their rights. In Mahomedan villages this was specially the case.⁸⁴ In the wake of the *Faraizi* movement, a tradition was established of the exploited masses of peasantry fighting unitedly against their exploiters. Neither caste distinctions nor communal differences obstructed the march of events during the indigo disturbances or in the peasant uprising of 1783 in Rangpur which was 'throughout marked by a rare combination of Hindus and Muslims.'⁸⁵ The same alliance was again exhibited during the indigo disturbances. This example of a class struggle *par excellence* received a rude jolt in the intervening period when the *Faraizi* movement held sway. With their overt emphasis on religious principles, the *Faraizi* peasantry failed to unite with their Hindu counterparts in a joint uprising against their common oppressors. The Muslim reform movements of the nineteenth century effected a transformation of the Muslim attitude towards Hindus. Their exponents did not merely indulge in theological speculation but preached directly to the Muslim masses (the Muslim ruling classes in fact were criticized for their willingness to collaborate with the British), against the customs which so many of them shared with the Hindus. Under these circumstances 'the religious and social activism of Dudu Miyan and Titu Mir in Bengal could result in a social and economic conflict assuming a communal guise'.⁸⁶

Primarily a religio-political movement, the *Tariqat-i-Muhammadiyah* sect, in order to restore Islam to its pristine purity, sought to denude it of all Hindu influences, but 'towards the Hindu religion itself and towards the Hindus themselves the attitude of the *mujahidin* was one of tolerant understanding.' This tolerance may also explain the responsive devotion of some educated Hindus to Sayyid Ahmad Bareilly.⁸⁷ Along with the *mujahidins* were several Hindus involved in the underground operation of transmitting money to the Frontier. Phagoo Lall of Patna was one of them. The religious aspect of the movement was thus 'related to the reformation of certain socio-religious evils in the body politic of the community and not the inculcation of a religious bias against other com-

munities.⁸⁸ In Bengal, however, where the revivalist movement assumed an economic character, the uprising of the suffering Muhammadan peasantry against oppressive landlords and money-lenders who were mainly Hindus led to sporadic outbursts of communal violence. 'This accidental grouping unfortunately deepened the hatred and roused the fanatical zeal' of the followers of Dudu Miyan and Titu Mir who took up the cause of the helpless creditors and oppressed tenants against exacting money-lenders and powerful *zamindars*.⁸⁹ By 1837, the growing conflict with the *zamindars* sharpened anti-Hindu character of the movement and various atrocities were committed on the Hindus of Dacca and Faridpur. Protesting against the *zamindars*' means of retaliation, Abdul Gafur, a *Wahhabi maulavi* openly declared: 'The Hindu *zamindars* are all leagued against us, and the Muhammadan *zamindars* do not care to help us.'⁹⁰ In their anxiety to secure the prosecution of Dudu Miyan or Titu Mir, frequent charges of murder, trespass, unlawful assembly, abduction or abetment of plunder of houses were brought against them, mainly through the instrumentality of European and Hindu landlords. It was in their struggle with the *zamindar* of Purwa who had harassed the followers of Titu, that the armed insurgents committed acts of communal nature.⁹¹ The attack upon Purwa was dictated by the spirit of revenge and the kind of revenge which the insurgents took was 'the surest evidence of the kind and reality of the injury which they had suffered'. The slaughtering of cows, defiling of Hindu temples and plundering of Hindu villages were but their retaliation against the injury which they had earlier suffered at the hands of the Hindu landlords—illegal taxation on the sect, oppression, harassment and burning of mosques. The cruel murder of the *Darogah* of Basirhat, the man who had been bribed-off by a *zamindar* during the investigation of an affray, in the bamboo stockade of Narkulbaria when all other prisoners were released by the *mujahidins*, go to strengthen the above conviction.⁹² Thus, the opposition of the Hindu landlords and their attempt to crush the *Wahhabi* and *Faraizi* movements in collusion with the indigo planters and the bureaucracy, and the British failure to mete out justice, exacerbated the communal aspects of the reformist movements. The attempt of the Government to suppress law-

lessness was interpreted by the reformists as support given to a class of people at whose hands they had suffered so much in the past. The above circumstances led A. R. Mallick to conclude that 'starting as a religious movement, it soon took the colour of an intensely communal organization aimed at oppressing the members of the other community at whose door they laid the cause of all their sufferings in the past.'⁹³ But actual occurrences as well as evidences left, do not bear testimony to the above view. The case against the communal character of the *Wahhabi* and *Faraizi* movements has been well established by some recent scholars like Amalendu De, Rafiuddin Ahmed and Salahuddin Ahmed. Rafiuddin Ahmad leads up to the conclusion: 'The movements did not set the poorer Muslims against the poorer Hindus in an open conflict on the basis of a religious ideology, nor did they divert lower class Muslims from economic issues to a false sense of solidarity with the richer Muslims.'⁹⁴ In fact even Titu Mir's movement was not necessarily anti-Hindu or communal in nature. It should be noted that Titu's movement was also directed against the economically privileged class of Muslims who refused to accept his doctrines and leadership.⁹⁵ Unpublished government records prove that the *Faraizis* were involved in disputes and legal proceedings with their Muslim landlords till the latter had accepted their demands.⁹⁶ In fact they broke into the houses of the Hindus and Muslims with perfect impartiality. 'Indeed, the Muhammadan proprietors had rather, the worst of it, as the banditti sometimes gave salvation to the daughter of an erring co-religionist by forcibly carrying her off, and appropriating her to one of the robber chiefs.'⁹⁷ In upper India though the *Wahhabis* aimed at the restoration of Muslim rule after extirpating the British rule, there was no instance of any conflict between the former and the Hindu community. From the very beginning, the *Wahhabis* fell heavily on any Muslim 'so criminal as to differ from their views'. In 1827-30, it was against an obdurate Mussalman Governor of Peshawar, quite as much as against the Sikhs, that their spiritual leader turned his arms.⁹⁸ Many Muslim landowners on their part tried various measures to stem the rising tide of the reformist movements even by inciting the traditional *mullahs* to issue *fatwas* against the reformists, denouncing the latter's activities

as un-Islamic.⁹⁹ Even a section of the Muslim tenants especially the *Hanafis* felt alarmed and aggrieved at the teachings which *inter alia* denounced some of their cherished social practices and customs. Several actions of the *Pirs*, however, must have been disapproved of by many of their followers, as for instance, when Dudu Miyan forcibly carried off a Brahmin girl and made her his *nikah* wife. Taking advantage of such complaints from the *ryots*, the Hindu zamindars tried to check the growth of an association which treated them with scant respect and exhibited a power of combination which might affect their interest.¹⁰⁰

Barring the isolated and sporadic cases of communal disorder that occurred from time to time, and remained confined to the areas where the Hindu *zamindars* and their agents sought to resist the movement, the *Faraizi* Movement and the Barasat Risings, studied in the wider background of the general *Wahhabi* movement, cannot therefore be characterized as a purely communal movement, as Dr R. C. Mazumdar has done in *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Indian Revolt of 1857*. Refuting the opinion of Dr R. C. Mazumdar, Qeyamuddin Ahmad has pointed out that 'the really important aspect of the movement, viz. its struggle with the European planters is lost sight of or neglected in emphasis by the scholars'. The areas covered by these disturbances comprised parts of the districts of Nadia and Barasat which were 'studded with Indigo factories, and not far from the Salt Agency at Bagundi.'¹⁰¹ It was also significant that the initial efforts against the insurgents were made by the planters themselves. It was due to their persistent representations that the authorities finally took steps against the rebels. The declaration of the cessation of the Company's rule was another significant fact to be considered. These facts were certainly not in consonance with the aims of a movement alleged to be solely directed against the Hindus.¹⁰² The process of Islamization initiated by the *Faraizis* and the *Wahhabis* reinvigorated the spirit of religious consciousness, which did not necessarily affect the harmonious relationship between the Hindus and the Muslims in the rural set-up till the time when it assumed a political complexion. Or else it would be difficult to explain how despite the inhibitive influence of

religious and caste prejudices, the Bengal peasantry could show a marked degree of class consciousness and unite against the common enemy during the Indigo disturbances (1858-60) and the Pabna Revolt (1872-73).¹⁰³

Politically, the reformists were eminently successful in rousing great enthusiasm among the masses. It was its first mass political movement and its last effort to recover India from the British. 'It is a curiosity of history that over a century before the creation of Pakistan, two miniature Muslim states struggled to emerge vaguely on the horizon of realization, if only for a very short while and against overwhelming odds, but ideologically linked together, and situated in the same Muslim majority areas,' (e.g. Bengal and the Punjab) which constituted the erstwhile Pakistan.¹⁰⁴ The tendency to regard India as a *Dar-ul-harb* and the suspension of the Friday congregational prayers and celebrations of the *Id* festivals 'implied a protest against the administrative changes of the British to the detriment of the Muslim community'. 'The attempt to inculcate a spirit of passive non-co-operation among the masses by refusing to take service under the English and by refusing to go to English Courts...' was the beginning of a principle on the basis of which a magnificent structure was to be raised in the subsequent history of India's freedom movement.¹⁰⁵ A call to '*jihad*' with a view to extirpating alien rule and reestablishing *Dar-ul-Islam* by the *Wahhabis*, anticipated though in an Islamic sense, the slogan of 'Hindustan Raj' which became a clarion call of the Mutineers in 1857. Its impetus was used by the old conservative forces in the Mutiny, their last bid for power, and for a rehabilitation of the society which had given them status. But at the same time, one of the cardinal failures of the nineteenth century fundamentalists lay in their inability to realize the real significance of the impact of western science and rationalism which the European nations brought to bear upon the East. The prejudices and fanaticism, imbibed from the *Wahhabi* and *Faraizi* leaders, fostered a spirit of non-cooperation with the Government, and continued for some time to deter the progress of the community. The retrograde nature of these movements strengthened the hold of conservatism and severed the Bengali Muslims' connection with the thought processes of the modern world. 'The utter futility of all efforts

to roll the nineteenth century back to the seventh, to resuscitate Islam in the face of the overwhelming and ever increasing powers of modern civilization would be gradually impressed on the next, if not the present generation of Muhammadans, thus completely neutralising all Wahhabi attempts to mislead them into hopeless rebellion', prophetically remarked the author of the article in the *Calcutta Review*.¹⁰⁶

The most serious aspect of revivalism in India whether among the Muslims or the Hindus in the nineteenth century was a return to different sources of inspiration and unlike traditions. Consequently the growing process of assimilation between the two communities through nearly six hundred and fifty years received a set-back from the impact of these reformist doctrines. These nineteenth century campaigns of Islamization attempted to reject 'virtually all that was Bengali in the life of a Muslim' and to rediscover a 'national past', 'now believed to be entirely different from, if not antithetical to, that of the Hindus'.¹⁰⁷ The Collector of Pabna reported in 1873 that under the influence of the *Faraizi* doctrines 'class rules were daily becoming more rigid, and the separation between Hindus and Muhammadans more marked'.¹⁰⁸ From the thirties of the nineteenth century the Muhammadans increasingly separated themselves from the Hindus under the influence of *Wahhabi* doctrines such as they never deemed necessary in the days of their supremacy. 'Hindus and Muslims alike began to give up many practices which they had imbibed from one another and which had served to bridge the chasm between the two communities. Many areas of common life and thought have thus been restricted and many meeting places obliterated'.¹⁰⁹ This attitude had been indirectly fostered by the Pan-Islamic diversion of Muslim sentiment and an emotional attachment, outside the borders of India to the spiritual head of Islam. This extra-territorial allegiance, though an artificially contrived sentiment, contributed to the development of a Muslim community-consciousness on the basis of a common Islamic brotherhood and prevented the Muslims from identifying themselves with their non-Muslim counterparts. This community-consciousness irrespective of race, language or country, militated against the development of a composite nationality of the western type that was gradually emerging on the political

horizon of the Bengali middle-class intelligentsia composed mainly of the Hindus. Simultaneously in the Hindu community there has never been any lack of support for the view that India had been and must remain primarily the land of the Hindus, in which the Muslims as also other non-Hindus were outsiders.¹¹⁰ Thus if the Hindus regarded the Muslims as *Yavanas*, the Muslims also preferred to remain foreigners at least in a religio-cultural sense. Despite their racial, cultural and linguistic affinities the idea became popular in Bengal that the Bengali Hindu was a Bengali and the Bengali Musalman was simply a Musalman.¹¹¹ This separate socio-cultural identity of the two communities was not a British invention. The British inherited a notion born of historical circumstances which matched hand-in-glove with their game of *divide-et-impera*, and in the ultimate analysis succeeded in maintaining a divisive social milieu which crystallized the in-group feelings of the two communities.

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42 Letters from the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir William Grey, 1868, in *Sir John Lawrence Collection*—Reel No. 8.

43 Education Secretary to the Government of Bengal to the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, No. 2944, dated 9 May 1865, in *Selections*, p. 103.

44 *Bogra District Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1910), p. 35.

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47 Ibid. pp. 110-111.

48 Ibid. p. 112 : from T. E. Ravenshaw, Magistrate of Patna, to the Commissioner of the Patna Division, No. 493, dated 9 May 1865.

49 *Home Judl. Progs.* 126, Letter No. 202 ct. dated Rajmehal, the 15th November, 1870 : from J. H. Reily, District Superintendent on Special Duty, to the Inspector General of Police, Lower Provinces.

50 Ibid. Statement A appended to the report of J. H. Reily, See also Appendix, 'A Petition from Syeed Usghur Ali offering to present to Government a work called the *Raddu Shirk* which would greatly assist the Government in putting down the *Wahhabils*.'

51 *Home Judl. Progs.* 27th March 1869, Nos. 30-33 : from H. L. Dampier, Offg. Secretary to the Government of Bengal, to A. P. Howell, Offg. Secretary to the Government of India, Simla, No. 6051, dated the 10th November, 1868.

52 *Home Judl. Progs.* 10th Sept. 1870, No. 59-60(B) : letter from Syed Ameer Hussain (Personal Assistant to the Commissioner of Bhaugulpore, to E. C. Bayley Esq., Secy. to the Govt. of India, Home Dept. dated 24th Aug. 1870.

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58 *Home Judl. Progs.* 126, Letter No. 202 ct. dated Rajmehal, the 15th November 1870 : from J. H. Reily, District Superintendent on Special Duty, to the Inspector General of Police, Lower Provinces.

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- 93 Ibid. p. 89.
- 94 R. Ahmed, op. cit., p. 45.

⁹⁵ A. F. Salahuddin Ahmed, 'Muslim Thought And Leadership In Bengal In The Nineteenth Century', p. 640, in *Essays In Honour Of Professor S. C. Sarkar* (New Delhi, 1976), p. 640.

⁹⁶ Amalendu De, *Bangali Buddhijibi O Bichhinnatabad* (Calcutta, 1974), pp. 128-31.

⁹⁷ Hunter, op. cit., p. 109.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid. pp. 109, 144, quoted in R. Ahmed, op. cit., p. 44.

¹⁰⁰ *Calcutta Review*, vol. 51, p. 177.

¹⁰¹ *Calcutta Review*, vol. 51, p. 180.

¹⁰² Qeyamuddin Ahmad, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

¹⁰³ S. Ahmed, *Essays*, p. 640.

¹⁰⁴ Aziz Ahmad, op. cit., p. 217.

¹⁰⁵ Qeyamuddin Ahmad, op. cit., p. 95.

¹⁰⁶ *Calcutta Review*, vol. 58, p. 64.

¹⁰⁷ R. Ahmed, op. cit., p. 106.

¹⁰⁸ *The Pabna District Gazetteer* (Calcutta, 1923), p. 289.

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Bengal Proper

A Study in Physiognomy and Demography

A frontier province of strategic and commercial importance, Bengal proper by virtue of its fertile soil and vast natural resources earned lavish epithets. Gaur in Bengal, in *bulghak-pur* (land of strife) of the pre-Mughal period, was bestowed with the epithet of *Jinnatabad*¹ (Abode of Heaven) by the Mughal Emperor Humayun. The author of the *Riyazu-S-Salatin* (Garden of Kings) who may be placed in the forefront of Bengal antiquarians and researchers, and was preeminently the historian of Muhammadan Bengal, described the province as *Jinnatul-Bilad*² or 'Paradise of Provinces'. Bernier, in his *Travels* remarked that '... the preeminence ascribed to Egypt is rather due to Bengal'³ as the finest country in the world. Compared to other parts of India, Bengal contained the largest variety of races and tribes and its people were 'physically distinct from any other race in India.'⁴ The Aryan element in the population was decidedly less in Bengal than in Bihar and the North-West; and on the other hand, there was a greater variety of semi-Hinduized aboriginal tribes.⁵ The Bengalis as a race were described as 'timid and slothful' in active pursuits, but subtle and sharp-witted in intellect.⁶

On the eve of the Muhammadan conquest, Bengal consisted of four Divisions, namely *Radha*, the tract south of the Ganges and west of the Hooghly; *Bagdi*, the deltaic tract of the Ganges; *Banga*, the tract to the east and beyond the delta; *Barendra*, the tracts to the north of the Ganges and between the Karatoya and Mahananda rivers. A physiognomical study of Bengal proper is illustrative of the striking contrast between the western (*Rarh*) and eastern (*Bagdi*) portions of the province in their geology, their physical characteristics, their agriculture and

even the religion of their inhabitants. The Bhagirathi was 'more than a mere physical boundary for west of it Hindus predominate, while on the east Musalmans are more numerous.'⁷ It was also a line of 'broad demarcation between the Eastern and Western Bengal socially and culturally.' In fact, the land of the Hindus ended in Bengal west of the Bhagirathi mainly due to geographic reasons.

It was not till the end of the twelfth century (1197-1198), to take 'the most plausible date', that the Muslim arms first penetrated into Bengal. But we have it on the authority of the learned analysis of old coins of the Bengal Muslim Kings by Thomas, that as 'early as the twelfth century there was free commercial intercourse between the south-eastern sea-board of Bengal and the Arab seaports of Baghdad and Basorah; and it would seem it was this commercial activity combined with superior martial and moral qualities that paved the way for Muslim domination throughout Bengal.'⁸ Entering Bengal as a foreign religion through the traders, conquerors and missionaries, Islam in the course of centuries 'completely changed the socio-religious pattern of Bengal.' Whereas in Northern India, under imperial domination for centuries, Islam was confined to the urban centres, in the deltaic Bengal it captured the rural society. In fact, Bengal became a *Sufi* stronghold in the early medieval period and their *dargahs* became the nerve-centres of the Bengali Muslim society. Their activities ranged from Chittagong and Sylhet in the east, to Mangalkot in the Burdwan district in the west, and from Bagerhat and Chhota-Pandua in the south to Kantaduar in Rangpur in the north.⁹ In city, town and village the *Sufis* formed themselves into the pivot of an inner circle of Muslim disciples and an outer circle of non-Muslims, mainly low-caste Hindus, whom they attracted and converted by their spirituality and humanity. The *Sufis* helped much in elevating the religious life and thought of Bengal and in promoting the Islamic spirit. Towards the Hindus and the Muslims alike, the spiritual policy of the *Sufi* missionaries was *sulh-i-kul* or peace with all. As a result of this peaceful penetration, the nature of the progress of Islam in Bengal was different from that in Northern India,¹⁰ where even in the rural areas Islamic proselytization was strongly opposed by powerful Hindu tribes like the Jats and the

Rajputs, intensely conservative and controlled by a strong Brahmanical hierarchy. Outside the borders of Bengal proper, Orissa remained 'the most essentially Hindu portion' of the province as a whole; and Bihar maintained 'a sturdy independent population' in which the superior castes of Hindus 'neither wanted nor were likely to accept the advantages which Islam offered to its converts'.¹¹

An important factor in the history of Bengal proper was the preponderance of the Muslim population particularly in its eastern districts. Not a word was said by Mughal chroniclers like Abul Fazl on the strength of his coreligionists in the population statistics of Bengal or the progress of Islam therein. Comparative statistics did not command any importance at the time. The remark made by old English travellers that 'the inhabitants of the islands and the coast of south-eastern Bengal were chiefly Muslims, and the uncertain legend regarding the introduction in the beginning of the sixteenth century, of Islamic rites into Chatgaon by Nucrat Shah', were the only allusions that Blochmann came across on the subject. 'Neither history nor legends allude to the conversions among the semi-aboriginal rural population, that must on a large scale have taken place during the reigns of the independent kings of Bengal, chiefly, no doubt through exertions of the numerous Afghan Jagirdars.'¹² The Bengali Muslims who were indistinguishable from their fellow-countrymen 'made their number felt for the first time in 1872' when the first official census revealed the presence of 17½ million Muslims in Lower Bengal.¹³ Nearly sixty years earlier Dr Francis Buchanan, who had been employed by the Bengal Government to make a statistical survey of the country on the north-east of the river Ganges, was one of the pioneers in the beginning of the nineteenth century in pointing out the presence of a large number of Muslims in those districts.¹⁴ A couple of decades later (1836) Adam in his reports on the state of vernacular education in Rajshahi pointed out the preponderance of the Muslim element in that district. The Census of 1872 revealed that throughout the central and eastern districts of Bengal comprising the four divisions or Commissionerships of the Presidency, Rajshahi, Dacca and Chittagong (with the exception of the 24-Parganas), the Muslims constituted at least one half of

the population. Within these districts was a central tract running from Rangpur and Mymensingh on the north to the Bay of Bengal in the South '*in every part of which the Muslims were in a decided majority*'.¹⁵ Within this central tract may be roughly carved a triangular zone comprising of the districts of Bogra, Rajshahi and Pabna where the adherents of Islam were most numerous (80 per cent, 77 per cent, 69 per cent respectively of the total population). In the districts of Chittagong and Noakhali also, the Muslims constituted as much as three-fourths of the population.¹⁶ However, there were few places in Bengal where there was not a sizeable minority of one or the other community. In Eastern Bengal the Hindus were one in three, in Western Bengal the Muslims were 13 per cent of the total population, while in the centre the two communities were equally balanced.¹⁷

In the absence of authentic historical evidence, various theories have been advanced to explain the presence of a Muslim majority in the population of Bengal proper on the basis of incidental references in historical chronicles and a more recent method of sociological analysis. Broadly speaking, two different theories have been advanced by scholars. One group consisting primarily of European scholars and civilians, on the basis of ethnological similarity and affinities in language, habits and customs, concluded that large-scale conversion of low-caste Hindus to Islam was the main contributory factor. The other group, consisting mainly of Muslim writers, as a reaction to the former view, contended that the presence of an overwhelming Muslim majority was the natural result of more than five hundred years of Muslim political domination in Bengal, the large majority of them being descendants of the nobility, gentry, soldiers and immigrant Muslims. Francis Buchanan was probably the earliest of the first group who observed that in many parts of Bengal 'the greater part of the cultivators would seem to have embraced the faith of Muhammad'.¹⁸ The first official proclamation on the subject came through the publication of the *Bengal Census Report* of 1872. Beverley 'eager to offer some excuse' for the general ignorance of the true number of Muslims in this province, explained that the Bengali Muslims were 'probably converts from low castes'. As history is unfortunately silent on the

subject of conversion, it is not clear whether conversion of the lower castes was more general in the eastern parts of Bengal, particularly in the districts of Rajshahi and Bogra. Yet for Beverley conversion appeared to be 'the only explanation' of the large numbers of Muhammadans found there who occupied 'the same social position as their Hindu neighbours'.¹⁹ Along with Beverley, Dr James Wise, W. W. Hunter, Sir Herbert Risley and many others believed that the Bengali Muslim was 'converted Hindu, and not a scion of any Mughal or Pathan stock,'²⁰ that 'in Bengal at any rate, the Muslims 'were recruited from the dregs of the Hindu Community, and embraced Islam as a short cut to social promotion.'²¹ Of these, the most convincing testimony was that afforded by the anthropometrical tests carried out by Risley which showed clearly that the foreign element amongst the Muslims of East Bengal was very small.²²

In trying to ascertain some of the probable causes that might have operated behind these large-scale conversions of Hindus to Islam, it is necessary to take note of the following factors. The presence of a large Muslim population in Bengal was concentrated not in the cities or the centres of Government, but scattered in the villages. Wherever the followers of Islam formed the bulk of the population, it was found as a rule that they belonged to the cultivating and labouring classes, whereas the Hindus constituted the middle and upper strata of society. In the districts in which the Muslims abounded was also found a large number of aboriginal tribes and people belonging to 'the lowest among Hindu castes' who were said to be 'the most amenable to proselytising influences'. In view of the above, that 'it was the lowest castes or tribes who thus embraced Islam, facts as well as reason seem to warrant us in believing.'²³ Within this socio-economic set-up, the egalitarian doctrines of Islam were found to have a tremendous appeal on 'the autochtones of Bengal' who were disorganized and demoralized by a caste-ridden Hindu society. In the absence of a firmly consolidated religious system among the aborigines and depressed classes strong enough to challenge the onslaughts of the missionaries or Afghan adventurers, Islam made a rapid progress in Bengal where Hinduism rested on 'weak and uncertain foundations' and Buddhism still lingered on.

Before long the caste system proved to be the Achilles' heel of Brahmanical Hinduism. The conquerors and missionaries of the Crescent 'brought with them a religious and social system under which the semi-amphibious aborigines of Bengal might occupy rival if not an equal, position to that of their late masters'. 'Naturally, very little persecution was required to change the faith of these miserable helots of Bengal...' 'The times and circumstances of the country must have demanded the revolution before it could be brought about by persecution alone.'²⁴

A district-wise survey of northern and eastern Bengal would point to the vital role that caste discriminations played in the mass conversion of low caste Hindus. In the maritime districts of Noakhali and Chittagong a sea-faring life was necessarily one of the main occupations of the people—an occupation, however, which no Hindu could follow without loss of caste. All the sailors of the east were therefore Muslims. Chittagong with its facilities for maritime commerce had a preponderant Muslim population.²⁵ In Bogra and Rajshahi, conversion of the numerous low caste Hindus from an exclusive caste system under which they were treated as no better than despised outcasts, to one which recognized all men as equals, appeared to be the only explanation for the large numbers of Muslims found there occupying the same social position as their Hindu neighbours. 'As still another proof of a local origin of the Muhammadans of the district,' Bogra like most of the districts of north-eastern Bengal, was peopled by the mixed races known as Koches, Meches, Bodos, and Dhimals.²⁶ Unable any longer to tolerate the despised name of Koch and being refused a decent status under the Hindu regime, they preferred Islam to helot Hinduism.²⁷ In the districts of Bakharganj and Faridpur where the Muslims largely abounded, were also found a large number of Kaibarttas and Chandals, the lowest among the Hindu castes and most easily amenable to proselytizing influences. In Rangpur, the Kochs, not admitted to the dignity of Rajbanshis, largely adopted the profession of Islam.²⁸ As the proportion of children among the aboriginal tribes were higher than in the other classes, it was probably due to their aboriginal extraction that the proportion of children among the Muslims in Bengal was not only greater than among the

Muslims elsewhere, but also greater than amongst the Hindus.²⁹

In fact there seems to be ample reason to believe that a relatively large proportion of the Muslim population of Bengal owed their origin to peaceful penetration of the Muslim missionaries. Under the protection and active patronage of the Muslim aristocracy, gentry and officers, 'the missionaries of the faith found freedom for the exercise of their zeal, and as a result of certain social and religious causes they were eminently successful.'³⁰ The 'benevolent despotism' of some of the Muslim Sultans of Bengal certainly popularized their administration and indirectly fostered the religion that they professed. Economic incentives and motives of self-interest also gained many converts from Hinduism to Islam 'when adherence to an idolatrous system stood in the way of advancement at the Muhammadan courts,'³¹ and entailed the payment of the hated *jizyah* or poll tax. But a vigorous and highly successful propaganda, carried on especially in the eastern and northern districts of Bengal, does not, however, adequately explain the swelling of the numbers of the Muslims in Bengal. Both Christianity and Islam have added to the number of their followers in India under particularly favourable social, political and economic conditions and not primarily from missionary zeal.³² In the main, Islam progressed not so much by direct conversion as by its own vitality. Between 1872 and 1881, the Muslim population showed a steady increase in all the five divisions of Bengal proper whereas the Hindus showed a steady decline in all but the Rajshahi Division.³³ From 1881 to 1891 'there was nothing to mar the general progress of the population of Eastern Bengal every district and tract showing a great and in most cases a very great increase.'³⁴ Within twenty years from the decade of the nineties, the former increased from eight to eleven and a quarter millions. Compared with their previous strength, the followers of the Prophet increased by nearly 8 per cent, while the Hindus multiplied by only 4 per cent.³⁵ This result was due partly to the circumstances that almost four-fifths of the Muslims lived in the healthier and more prosperous areas of eastern and northern Bengal which was capable of supporting the most rapid and dense increase of population. The Muslims 'gained ground in every Division as compared with their Hindu neighbours'³⁶

from a conjunction of several factors. The tracts where the Muslims were mainly found escaped the stress of famine, the loss by conversion to other religions was insignificant, and there was a steady, though small gain by accession from the ranks of Hinduism.³⁷ Generally, the Muslims showed more enterprise than their Hindu neighbours in clearing up jungles wherever arable land was found and in reclaiming new alluvial formations. This was one of the reasons why they preponderated most in the islands and along the shore. This increase in the proportion of the followers of Islam can also be generally attributed to greater fecundity among the Muslims and more nutritious diet, the practices of polygamy, widow marriage and the *nikah* system of marriage, greater equality in the ages of husband and wife and the absence of infant marriage. As a result, a Muslim family was larger and longer-lived. More important still, for its effect on Islam, was the incidence of Hindu-Muslim marriages which resulted in conversion to Islam, and the children of these mixed marriages invariably came within the fold of Islam. It was also a common practice among the Muslims to purchase a number of boys during a scarcity and educate them in the religion of Islam. These boys and all other converts were allowed to take the Arabian title of *Shaikh* and their posterity was perhaps more numerous than the genuine descendants of the stock to which they all ascribe their origin.³⁸

The Hindus, on the contrary, were towards the close of the nineteenth century 'a dying race'. 'It appears that nineteen years ago in Bengal Proper Hindus numbered nearly half million more than Muslims did, and that in the space of less than two decades, the Muslims have not only overtaken the Hindus, but have surpassed them by a million and a half. During 1881 to 1891 the increase of population in Bengal Proper has been 7.4 per cent, that of Hindus, being only 4.7 and of Muslims 9.6 or more than double that of Hindus.'³⁹ The number of persons returned as Hindus in 1901 was less by half a million than it was ten years previously, and the proportion borne by them to the total population had also declined. This was due mainly to the circumstance that the low-lying tracts of western and central Bengal where the Hindus generally preponderated, were those that suffered most from famine and Malaria. The gains

from the ranks of the Animists were probably exceeded by the losses on account of conversions to Muhammadanism and Christianity, and the social customs of the Hindus, especially the prevalence of infant marriage and the prohibition of the marriage of widows, tended to diminish their reproductive capacity, as compared with the adherents of other creeds.⁴⁰ Taking the figures for the Hindus and the Muslims under similar conditions, the death-rates were, as a rule, in favour of the latter. For the period 1891-1896 the mean death-rate of the latter was lower than that of the Hindus in Bengal. Again the available records of mortality from plague, while subject to many qualifications, afforded testimony to the greater power of resistance which the Muslims enjoyed, once again probably from the nature and variety of their food habits.⁴¹

The whole thesis about the origin of the Bengal Muslims centred round two alternative hypotheses. Either it was maintained that the Muslims were low caste Hindus converted to Islam, an issue which has been already studied in some detail in the foregoing pages ; or that they were immigrants, *Mughals*, *Syeds*, *Pathans* or at least *Shaikhs*. Among the protagonists of the latter view was the translator of the *Riyazu-S-Salaten*, Maulavi Abdus Salam, who asserted that 'without having recourse to theories of a more or less fanciful character for which there appears little or no historical warrant', the general immunity of Bengal from wars and disturbances at a time when the whole of Upper India was convulsed by fratricidal wars and foreign invasions accounted in a large measure for the existence of a comparatively large Muslim population in Bengal contrasted with that in Upper India.⁴² The *Siyar-ul-Mutakherin*, a contemporary account by Mir Gholam Hussein-khan, referring to the Maratha invasions of Bengal, remarked, that 'occurring as they did only in the middle of the eighteenth century, would sufficiently explain why the Musalman populations in Eastern Bengal and even near Murshidabad (the latest Musalman capital in Bengal) are numerically much less than those in Eastern or Northern Bengal'. There was a general exodus of the Musalman nobility and gentry from the western side of the Ganges to the eastern and northern sides which were immune from Maratha raids.⁴³ Towards the close of the nineteenth century Khan Bahadur Dewan Fuzli Rubbee of Murshida-

bad wrote a whole book *Haqiqat-i-Musalman-i-Bangala*, drawing copious references from Muslim chronicles like *Tarikh-i-Ferista*, *Tabaquat-i-Akbari* and *Tarikh-i-Mansoori*, to prove that the Muslims of Bengal were largely descended from noble and aristocratic families who migrated to Bengal at different periods of history from outside, and were accorded a liberal treatment 'according to their respective ranks and positions, and so far as circumstances allowed.'⁴⁴ To draw the attention of the British Government and European historians to this question, he himself translated the book into English under the title, *The Origin of the Muhammadans of Bengal*.⁴⁵ In order to vindicate his views he rejected Hunter's remarks in the *Statistical Account of Murshidabad* (p. 60), about the return of the great Muhammadan families to Delhi or Persia after Bengal's subjection to the British as 'erroneous' and 'untenable'.⁴⁶ He also rejected Beverley's low-caste theory as 'wrong' and 'groundless'.⁴⁷ An important point cited by Rubbee as proving the presence of aristocratic and high class Muslims in Bengal was the fact that most of the *parganas*, villages and hamlets in this country bore Muslim names, 'thus denoting clearly that their *Ta-ahhuddars* and owners were at one time Mussalmans' (e.g. *Perganah-i-Barbakabad*, *Perganah-i-Zafaru Jal*, etc.).⁴⁸ Moreover, the differences in physique and appearance between the Bengali Muslims and Hindus, the admixture of Arabic and Persian words in the Musalmani Bengali dialect, and the dissimilarity of habits and customs in the two communities, were adduced as further arguments to vindicate his theory. Having remarked earlier that the descendants of the great Muhammadan families were 'still up to this day in possession of the *sanads* and landed property (though split into pieces)', Rubbee later failed to give the history of those ancient families in Bengal on the plea that 'ignorance and poverty have so much reduced them to a position that they are now altogether fused with the masses.'⁴⁹ Finally, according to Rubbee, the concentration of the great majority of the Muslim gentry in the villages was due to the exposure of cities and towns to revolutions of governments and also because the *aimas* and *madadi-ma'ash* and other similar grants made by rulers lay commonly in the rural areas.⁵⁰ But one fails to understand why the same factor did not

operate in the case of the Hindus, a large majority of whom were invariably found in and around towns and cities. Moreover, as per Rubbee's own confession that cultivation of lands with one's own hands was not in accordance with the Islamic 'notions of respectability',⁵¹ it becomes once again difficult to explain how the large majority of the Bengali Muslims were field-labourers or agriculturists rather than proprietors of land.

The objections raised by Rubbee to Beverley's low-caste theory do not 'in any way account for the fact that there were some 25 millions of Muhammadans in Bengal, or explain their local distribution'. In eastern and northern Bengal, where the Muslims preponderated, the stream of immigration must have been thin and attenuated compared to the neighbourhood of the old capitals at Gaur, Pandua, Rajmahal and Murshidabad.⁵² Curious as it may appear, it was not in the vicinity of the great Mughal capitals that we find the Muslims most numerous. In Dacca, however, which for a long time contained the seat of Government, the Muslims were very slightly in excess of the Hindus. In Malda, which contained the city of Gaur, the Muslims formed only 46 per cent of the population. In Murshidabad they were scarcely 45 per cent and in Patna 12 per cent. On the other hand in Bakharganj, Tripura, Rangpur and Mymensingh, they constituted two-thirds of the local population, and in Dinajpur, Nadia, Jessore and Faridpur more than a half.⁵³ This circumstance again seems to point to the conclusion that the existence of the Muslims in Bengal was not due so much to the introduction of Mughal blood into the country as to the conversion of the former inhabitants for whom a rigid system of caste discipline rendered Hinduism intolerable. The number of the old Muslim families was very small in East and North Bengal. For the province as a whole, 'it would appear that the strength of the foreign element amongst the Muhammadans of Bengal cannot, at the most, exceed four millions, or say, one-sixth of the total number of persons who profess the faith of Islam.'⁵⁴ Along with the report of Abu A. Ghaznavi, a leading Muhammadan gentleman of Mymensingh and a strong supporter of the theory of the foreign origin of the Muslims, several others collected from all the districts in Bengal pointed to the conclusion that the great bulk of the Muslim population in Eastern and Nor-

thern Bengal were descended from local converts.⁵⁵ In every division where the aboriginal tribes were found in any number they showed a greater proportion of children than in the other classes. Hence, it was probably due to their aboriginal extraction, that the proportion of children among the Muslims in Bengal was not only greater than among the Muslims elsewhere, but also greater than amongst the Hindus.⁵⁶

The majority of the Bengali Muslims were converts from the original inhabitants of the country, as was evident from the close resemblance between the low-caste Hindus and the Muslims of Bengal. The Muslims of the delta differed little in language, customs or occupation from the other inhabitants of the country.⁵⁷ In Bengal the vernacular language of the Muslims was Bengali, not Hindustani, far less Urdu. Buchanan had pointed out as early as 1812 that they frequently met at the same shrine and invoked the same object of worship though perhaps under different names (*Satya Narayan* and *Satya Pir*). They spoke the same language as their Hindu neighbours. Their very names were the same, the prefix of *Shaikh* alone distinguishing the convert to Islam. If a *Chandal* or a *Rajbanshi* and a Bengali Muslim were placed together, it would be difficult to distinguish the one from the other, if there had not been some peculiarity of dress or the mode of cutting the hair. The probability is that they are one and the same race, and only within the last few centuries have they ceased to profess the same religion.⁵⁸

The arguments of Fuzli Rubbee have been controverted in recent times by Kazi Abdul Wadud. Though not denying the main contention in the researches of Rubbee that there was quite a large inflow of immigrant Muslims into Bengal from outside, it is difficult, according to Wadud, to ascertain their exact percentage in the total population of Bengal proper. But the most important argument adduced by the Kazi against Rubbee's whole thesis is that the conquerors usually took wives from the conquered territory. Hence there can be no gainsaying the fact that the Hindustani Syeds, Shaikhs, Mughals or Pathans owed their origin to this important factor.⁵⁹ Moreover, Rubbee had either overlooked or deliberately missed two vital points: many Bengalis voluntarily embraced Islam after witnessing the miraculous powers of the Muslim *faqirs*, and there were marked

differences in dress, manners and customs between the upper and the lower classes of Bengali Muslims, a fact which had much earlier prompted the translator of the *Siyar-ul-Mutakherin* to dub the latter as Muslims merely in name. Although Rubbee's arguments on the whole do not seem tenable, yet the fact remains according to Wadud that the Muslim peasants were a distinct community with a distinct spirit when compared with their Hindu counterparts. Believing in a religion of equality and brotherhood, the followers of the Prophet were more permeated with religious zeal and their enthusiasm was evinced and stimulated by visits to Mecca and other places of pilgrimage. There was more of a feeling of unity amongst them, than was to be found amongst the Hindu villagers.

The differences in religion and in certain outward forms of behavioural pattern notwithstanding, the relations between the two principal communities of the province, Hindus and Muslims, even in the heydays of Mughal imperialism had been far from unfriendly, particularly in the rural areas. The tolerance born of ignorance in, and indifference to their respective religions made the Hindus and Muslims good friends. Rival faiths were not only tolerated but drew common devotees from both the communities. Common beliefs and practices, worship of the same deities and participation in one another's ceremonials and festivals had become a regular feature in the lives of the Bengali Hindus and Muslims. Amusements like *jatras* and *Baroyaris* were enjoyed by Hindus and Muslims alike for which subscriptions were raised, and the Muslims willingly joined in the *Baroyaris* although the Hindus were the principal organizers. Hindu idols were worshipped and the *jatra* and *kabi* parties performed Hindu mythological pieces. These apart, there were also separate traditions of the Muslims and the Hindus like the *ghaziram* songs of the former and the *bhajandar* parties of the latter. A good deal of neighbourly feeling generally prevailed among the Hindu and Muslim peasants of the Bengal districts and the two classes lived in perfect peace and concord. But in the wake of the nineteenth century fundamentalist movements Islam ceased to be a natural feature of Bengal life, and its further expansion ended. With an intensification of orthodoxy, Islam in Bengal became less accommodating in spirit. Consequently on the one hand, its appeal to the natural emo-

tionalism of the people was considerably weakened. And its followers on the other, particularly the lower class residents of the villages in eastern Bengal with a heightened sense of religious consciousness, became aware of their separate identity as a community.

Bengal's upper class Muslim society being really alien both in race and culture never ceased to regard themselves as members of the ruling classes. With the establishment of British rule in India they became increasingly conscious of their erstwhile 'political importance'. To this was added the rapid increase of the Muslim population during the period 1871-91 which not only changed the demographic character of Bengal, but also left a lasting impression on the psychological make-up of the Bengali Muslims by making them more self-conscious and assertive about their rights and privileges. Historically the religions professed by the Bengali Muslims came from the west, as also their political masters in the main, though Bengal was not always a part of the North Indian empire. 'Notions born of historical facts of Northern India have been long held as true also of Bengal.'⁶⁰ Behind all these notions there was a strong suggestion that to be a Muslim it was always necessary to be an alien, if not by race and origin, certainly in culture and social ideals. These facts lent a sense of aristocracy to the immigrants from the west and as a result there has been a persistent attempt among the rising middle class to repudiate the Bengali origin,⁶¹ and to claim foreign descent and therefore aristocracy. 'The extent of the craze for rediscovering foreign origin may be understood by the vastly disproportionate increase in the number of persons claiming foreign origin' during the period 1872 to 1901.⁶² It is indeed a curiosity of history that 'even the converts from Hindu society had under compulsion if not also by choice to develop an alien attitude.'⁶³ Conscious of their superior socio-economic status the upper classes of Bengali Muslims drew a line of demarcation between themselves and the ordinary Muslim masses. Although theoretically Islam did not permit caste difference, yet in practice the influence of Hinduism on Islam nowhere left a more definite mark than in the creation of caste distinctions which indicated social status as clearly as they did in the Hindu society. In the opinion of Rubbee, 'rigid and scrupulous regard has

ever been paid by the Musalmans to social position and family dignity.⁶⁴ Broadly speaking, the Muslim community of Bengal was divided into three social groups. The *Ashraf* or *Sharifzats*, i.e. the upper circle of *soi-disant* foreigners with their usual taboos on inter-marriage and social intercourse with the *Ajlaf Zats* or the bulk of the 'low people' as converts of indigenous origin are called in Bengal. The third was the *Arzal* or degraded Muslims with whom neither the *Ashraf* or *Ajlaf* groups ever associated. The Ashrafs had no doubts as to their superiority to the local converts. The *Nau-Muslims* or the newly converted Muslims on the other hand remained in a probationary status for a time, their further advance being dependent on conduct and prosperity. In fact the social position of a Muslim convert exactly corresponded to the station he held previous to his conversion. A low caste person on his embracing Islam was not allowed to hold familiar intercourse or claim equality with high-born Muslims. As a result, the average Muslim converts seldom came up as competitors in the struggle for political or economic power and could hardly think of seeking a position of equality with their more fortunate coreligionists.

The above treatment of class or caste consciousness among the Muslims of Bengal provides the necessary background against which Muslim 'depression' in Bengal during British rule ought to be studied. A psychology of superiority was frequently encountered among the upper class Muslims coupled with a belief that their religious or social system was above correction. A marked inertia, unmanly dependence, unmistakable unwillingness on the part of the majority to work for a living could be identified as the natural result of their false pride of lineage or ancestry and was subversive of all progress. The Muslim masses on the other hand, who did not demur to the use of the term *Atraf*, frankly admitted their inferiority to the *Ashraf*. They did not however choose to know or admit that they were descendants of converts to Islam. According to them, they were the tillers of the soil, while the *Ashraf* did not cultivate the land with their own hands. 'In spite of the explosion of the theory of foreign extraction or so-called "purity of blood" the upper class Muslims always kept alive this theory just to serve their narrow interests. They did not undertake the responsibility of making the vast un-educated

Muslim masses conscious about their origin in the light of modern researches.⁶⁵

The *Ashraf* society which was formed in the urban areas during the Mughal period maintained their separate identity through the cultivation of a Perso-Arabic culture. U.P. and Bihar were the strongholds of the Muslim upper class even though they were numerical minorities there, and their culture began to be increasingly regarded as the cultural ideal of the Bengali Muslims. Nowhere was this tendency more marked than in the sphere of language. The better educated Muslim converts often deliberately abandoned their native language. 'The system of Islamic education given through Madrassahs in Bengal where Urdu and not Bengali was the medium spread the idea to the lower level of the society, whereas for the growing middle class coming up from below, even though through English education, the ideal was set by the Muslim official class who from the first day of the Company's rule were drawn from the Mughals.'⁶⁶ The Bengali Muslims thus set their face against their own culture which was not Hindu. Even since they started making sustained efforts at adjusting themselves to things foreign, they ceased to be creative in cultural pursuits.⁶⁷ The attempt made by the Muslim leaders to wean away the Muslim masses from the main currents of Bengali life by artificially imposing the divisive influences of religion and language did not however ultimately succeed. The former therefore sought to preserve their separate identity by giving the Bengali language further accretions of Persian and Arabic words. 'In this way a great change took place in the social set-up of the Bengali Muslims.'⁶⁸

The position of the Bengali Muslims *vis-a-vis* their co-religionists in Northern India and the Hindus in their own province point unmistakably to the conclusion that the community was not homogeneous in character in terms of social, economic and political status. Language, caste and economic standing worked together to divide Muslims from Muslims no less than Muslims from Hindus. Narrow sectarian divisions that cut across Islam hindered the prospects of cohesive development even among the Muslims themselves. While one-third of the Muslims in India lived in Bengal, they differed profoundly from the Muslims in other parts of the country. In the North-

Western Provinces and Oudh, which had been a centre of Muslim power since the end of the twelfth century, there was a complete reversal of the state of things in Bengal. There the Muslim community was a minority of some thirteen per cent, but as a class belonged to the middle and higher strata and was more influential, more prosperous and better educated. 'A far larger proportion of the community lived in towns, and of the rural Muslims many were landlords, whereas in Bengal the typical Muslim was a poor peasant.'⁶⁹ In the eastern districts of Bengal where the Muslims were most numerous this was particularly evident. In Bakharganj, the Muslims constituted 64.8 per cent of the population but owned less than 10 per cent of the estates and paid less than 9 per cent of the total land revenue. In Mymensingh, Muslim proprietors were just under 16 per cent and paid just over 10 per cent of the district's land revenue. Indeed most Muslims in Bengal were simple cultivators, artisans and fishermen who in social standing, appearance, language and customs, closely resembled the lowest Hindu castes. While in other parts of India the Muslims tended to be more numerous in the towns, in east Bengal they did not 'evinced any tendency towards city life.'⁷⁰ A survey of the geographical distribution of the two communities in Bengal proper leads to a rough generalization that the Muslim representation in towns was much weaker compared to that of the Hindus. Owing to the fertility of the soil, the Muslims who generally predominated in the riverside lands and *chars* were 'not driven to the necessity of seeking occupation elsewhere'. Besides, a peculiar attachment to the home was evident in a Muslim's marked disinclination for emigration.

The Hindu element in the population of Bengal proper by its constitution represented a higher social stratum, the Muslim element a lower one. The Europeans therefore were not conscious in the early nineteenth century of the existence of the Bengali Muslims as Muslims. Until 1872 the general impression was that Bengal was a Hindu country and the notion found expression in publications including school textbooks. Commenting on the state of vernacular education in the district of Rajshahi, Adam pointed out that it was not difficult to perceive how the 'contrary impression' gained ground

among the European functionaries, and from them had been transferred to the publications of the day. The Hindus with exceptions of course, were the principal *zamindars*, *talookdars*, public officers, men of learning, money-lenders, traders, shopkeepers, and engaged in 'the most active pursuits of life,' came 'directly and frequently under the notice of the rulers of the country,' while the Muslims with exceptions formed 'a very large majority of the cultivators of the ground and of day labourers,' and were engaged 'in the very humblest forms of mechanical skill...'.⁷¹ While the husbandmen among the Hindus were only 49·28 per cent, the ratio among the Muslims was 62·81 per cent.⁷² It has been frequently observed that the Muslims were the ruling class before the British came. It is equally true and much more important that the Muslims were the lowest class, remarked W. C. Smith.⁷³ Islam raised the ideological, but not the economic level of the vast number of converts that it made. With the establishment of British rule, wealth, learning and influence came to be increasingly concentrated in the hands of the Hindus since they formed the bulk of the upper and middle classes. The number of Muslim *zamindars* in Bengal proper was very small, and though the followers of the Prophet dealt in hides and to some extent in jute, the wealthy trading families were nearly all Hindus. A large number of the petty shopkeepers were Muslims, but they did not have the requisite capital to compete with the Hindus in whole-sale or quasi-whole-sale trade and the cream of commerce thus passed into Hindu hands.⁷⁴

The advent of the English in the political arena of Bengal, the diverse reactions of the Hindus and the Muslims to the changed circumstances and their consequent disparate development fructified in a 'Hindu-Muslim problem' as it had never existed before. Statistical charts compiled at the instance of the British rulers proved Muslim backwardness in education and service, in relation first, to its growing number in the population of Bengal proper; and secondly, in comparison to the more advanced Hindus. But this whole attempt is bound to be misleading, based as it is on comparing the two principal communities who were even at the beginning of British rule vastly unbalanced in terms of social stratification and economic status. A study of the class composition of the

Bengali Hindus and Bengali Muslims is illustrative of the fact, as has been noted earlier, that in Bengal proper the former were below the latter in numbers, but above them in social status and rank. This state of affairs was clearly detected by C. J. Lyall, Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Assam, when he remarked on 24 September, 1882 that 'so far as there was a Muslim depression' it 'was almost entirely a question of social position'.⁷⁵ It is not surprising therefore, that the political and social development of the Bengali Muslim intelligentsia of the nineteenth century suffered from an unfavourable comparison with the Bengali Hindus, and a stultifying competition with the latter to achieve the 'loaves and fishes' of Government service. The growing alienation of the Hindu-Muslim intelligentsia in the urban set-up along with an increasing consciousness of their separate identity, and the fanatical socio-religious exclusiveness of the Muslim masses of rural Bengal under the influence of the *Wahhabi* and *Faraizi* doctrines, percolated into the politics of the time and became a fact of the first importance. These divisive influences within the Indian society were not altogether unwelcome to the British administrators of the country whose pronounced motto was to rule India by balancing and dividing its various communities, principally the Hindus and the Muslims. But in fairness to the British bureaucracy, it may be remarked that towards the close of the nineteenth century when some of its astute statesmen thought and spoke of the Hindus and the Muslims in terms of two separate nations in the political cosmos of India, they did not originate the idea, but inherited it from the Mughal times. The notion nonetheless proved to be a potent instrument in the hands of the bureaucracy to defend their persistent refusal to contemplate the development of parliamentary government in India. Similarly taking into account the fact that 'even in the heyday of Muslim rule most of the well-to-do and literate inhabitants of east Bengal were not Muslims, but Hindus of the higher castes,' it appears that 'the imposition of British rule strengthened, and did not create, their hold upon administration and land.'⁷⁶

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3A

Muslim 'Depression'—Causes and Effects

The Politics of the Anjuman-i-Islami

The essential difference in the spirit of the Hindus and of the Muslims, the genuine outcome of their respective historical experiences, found expression in diverse reactions to the establishment of British rule. Bengal was the first to feel the dynamic impact of a new economy, of English education, of western ideas and of Christianity on its static feudal society. Three factors, namely, the Permanent Settlement, western education and business involvements, operated in quite a methodical way to bring into existence the new urban social *milieu* comprising the *zamindars* and a comprador class, Hindu in composition and pro-British in character. The process of the rise of new social classes among different communities was an uneven one. It was predominantly out of the Hindu community that the Bengali bourgeoisie emerged. It was the *Banyas* (traders and shroffs) of the pre-British period, and the Brahmins, the custodians of education among the Hindus, that projected respectively a commercial and financial bourgeoisie and an educated middle class. 'The upper strata of the Muslim community in the pre-British period were, on the whole, divorced from medieval trade or money-lending and were mainly engaged in military and administrative careers. Further, they predominantly resided in Northern India which came under British rule much later. The vast Muslim population of Bengal mainly belonged to the poorer classes. Hence a modern intelligentsia, a modern educated middle class and a bourgeoisie, on a substantial scale, sprang from within the Muslim community later than from within the Hindu community.'¹

It was a singular misfortune of history that the Muslims of Bengal suffered most severely under British rule. A series of innovations ushered in the spheres of army, revenue, education and judicial administration were felt to add injury to insult to the Muslim 'aristocracy of wealth and intelligence'. The army under British rule was virtually closed to the Muslims. Changes in the land-revenue system introduced by the Company, culminating in the Permanent Settlement of 1793, edged the Muslims out of the revenue collecting system. 'The whole tendency of the settlement,' remarked Hunter, 'was to acknowledge as the landholders the subordinate Hindu officers who dealt directly with the husbandmen.' The management of the revenues was chiefly carried on by the English servants of the Company and by the Hindus who, from their education and habits of diligence and frugality, possessed great advantages over the Muslims in conducting all affairs of finance and accounts. 'In consequence of this change, the Moham-medan families have lost those sources of private emoluments which could enable them to bestow much expense on the education of their children, and are deprived of the power which they formerly possessed of endowing or patronising public seminaries of learning...' The Permanent Settlement, however, did not bring about the virtual extinction of the Muslim aristocracy, as was claimed in an exaggerated language by W. W. Hunter. Even in the pre-British period the majority of the *zamindars* and the *ijaradars* belonged to the Hindu section of the population.³ Property passed to a considerable extent during the British period from the hold of the hereditary possessors to the Hindu *nouveaux riches*—the merchants, money-lenders, shop-keepers and regraters who had the requisite capital to grasp the opportunities accruing from the Permanent Settlement. But the absence of a middle class economically so defined gave the Muslims of Bengal a depressed character. Around the mid-fifties of the nineteenth century, the *Friend of India* cited the example of the richest and most populous of the Metropolitan countries, Hooghly (which had been in Muhammadan hands up to 1850, where 'every official mentioned during the conquest of Bengal was a Mussalman') as bearing out the 'popular view' of Muslim depression. At all events their number had gone down substantially and only

three great estates were in the hands of the Muslims. 'To use Akber's illustration, the water has poured through the sieve, and the sponge has sucked it up.'⁴ To the horror of their economic dislocation was added the apprehension, that under the new regime, their educational institutions were going to be wiped out. The resumption by the Bengal Government of the *muafis* (tax-free grants of land, which were mostly in the shape of endowments for educational institutions), on the failure to produce valid title-deeds, alienated the affections of the landed and the sacerdotal aristocracy and gave colour to the charge of violated faith. Numerous holders of grants were ejected, and the schools and colleges lost their endowments.

Among the several charges on which the Bengali Muslims arraigned the Government was the new scheme of public instruction which left the whole community unprovided for, and which landed it in contempt and beggary.⁵ Lord Macaulay, regardless of the warnings of H. H. Wilson and others of the older school, had declared uncompromisingly for Western education. While Sanskrit and Arabic education was discontinued in Government schools, missionary schools were opened where Christianity was openly taught. Orthodox Muslims and Hindus were equally alarmed, but the Muslims in particular, with their education rooted in religion, found the new system of education opposed to their traditions, unsuited to their requirements and hateful to their religion. The substitution of English for Persian as the official language in 1835 really marked a crisis in the history of the Muslims all over India. This particular decision of the Government along with the collapse of the Muslim educational system had the most injurious effect on their employment in Government services. As many as eight thousand Muslims of Calcutta remonstrated against the policy of diverting funds exclusively for the promotion of study in English. The policy of de-Indianization of services began by Lord Cornwallis and confirmed by the Charter Act of 1793 started excluding the Hindus and largely the Muslims, who till the advent of the British and even a few decades after, had monopolized all the higher offices of the state. The Muslims complained not only against extrusion from the legal profession which was mainly their proserve, but also against an Act of the Legislation (Act XI of 1864

abolishing Hindu and Muslim law-officers) which deprived them of the one essential functionary for the fulfilment of their domestic and religious law; a measure which by a single stroke of the pen threw a large section of the people out of employment.

Several scholars seeking for the reasons behind Muslim backwardness have overlooked the fact that the changes noted above affected the Hindus no less than the Muslims. Several Hindus dependant for their livelihood on the use of Persian were affected by the changeover from Persian to English. The ultra-Anglicist Government Resolution of 1835, warmly welcomed by the young students of the Hindu College, was stoutly opposed by the Orientalists. Orthodox Hindu society became alarmed and its conflict with the ultra-radicals of the Hindu College intensified. The Landholders' Society formally inaugurated in Calcutta in 1838 formed 'a nucleus of opposition in the metropolis, composed of wealthy zamindars' against the wholesale spoliation of rent-free tenures. In course of a speech delivered in the precincts of the Society on 22 March 1843, Dakshina Ranjan Mukhopadhyaya referred to the resumption measure 'which exhibited the Government in the act of trampling on their own regulations and breaking their own most sacred pledges.'⁶ The introduction of a series of social legislations (e.g. abolition of *Sati* and infanticide and introduction of widow-marriage) by the Government, though of course, with the active support of the liberal and progressive Hindus, deeply wounded the feelings of the great majority of conservative Hindus. Comparatively speaking, Government interference with the time-honoured social customs of the Muslims was minimal.

Moreover, as long as Persian continued to be the *lingua franca*, the position of the Muslims remained entrenched in the fields of education and administration. For more than half a century after the Company became the real ruler of Bengal, the Muslim monopoly of civil service continued. The Code of Islam remained the law of the land, and the Muslims continued as judicial officers. 'Muslim aristocratic families were, by tradition, considered the only sources which could be drawn upon for manning the services.'⁷ When Lord Bentinck opened certain judicial offices to Indians, the Government appointed the

majority of officers from the Muslim community. The earliest complaint against Government favouritism to a particular community in the distribution of jobs came from the side of the Hindus. The *Samachar Darpan* quoted a letter from the *Bangabhumī* which stated sarcastically: 'We had understood, that the consideration of our Sovereign was extended equally to all. Of this we have now a proof.... It is only to Mussulmans that the favour of Government has been extended. The names of only one or two Hindus appear.'⁸

Notwithstanding the opposition from the more conservative sections, a group of dynamic, enterprising and forward-looking Bengali Hindus realized the need to forge connections with the progressive cultural forces of the western world. The Hindu College was opened on 20 January 1817 for 'the tuition of the sons of respectable Hindus in the English and Indian languages and in the literature and science of Europe and Asia'. The Hindu College pioneered the spread of Western knowledge and English education that provided the background to the awakening of Bengal in the nineteenth century. But before long, the introduction of a liberal system of a education and the influence of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, (1809-1831) a widely popular professor of the College, brought about a temporary but pronounced reaction against Hinduism and orthodoxy among a small section of ultra-radical students of the College. Most of these Derozians became ardent admirers of Western civilization and discarded their own past traditions recklessly. The absence of the same liberal education among the Muslims gave them an intransigent attitude towards British modernism, the British mode of life, the British system of education and indeed everything British.

The Muslims of Bengal, not fully reconciled to British supremacy in the earlier years of the nineteenth century and still overtly sensitive about their erstwhile political dominance were neither in the mood, nor were equipped to play a leading part in public life. A natural sense of humiliation coupled with their 'bigoted trust in the superiority of their own creed and literature' averted the dawn of a Muslim renaissance, and resulted in their persistence in insularity in social relations and education inhibiting the potential development of their community in a rapidly changing set-up. Educational

movements along western lines were watched by the *maulavis* and fanatics with the greatest suspicion as they had their vested interests in a continuance of Islamic classical learning. It was a natural tendency of the Muslims of the Lower Provinces of Bengal to look up to the *ulema* of the north-west for leadership and religious guidance. But this conservative priestly class at this critical juncture failed to provide the much needed leadership and called upon their co-religionists to shut their minds against alien ideas in order to save their faith and culture. But years later this mistaken attitude was ruefully admitted. Had the missionary *mullahs* advised the Muslims 'to receive English education along with acquiring religious learning instead of declaring war against western education via English and Bengali, then probably our society would have been presenting a completely different appearance.'⁹ The generality of the Muslims were more inclined to listen to the preachings of bigoted *mullahs* rather than learn the language of the foreigners. The few landed families that had managed to survive, maintained the traditions of Persian and Arabic learning, but they 'shared none of the Hindu *bhadralok's* passion for English-language education.' The mass of the Muslim community in Bengal consisting mainly of peasant converts from the lower Hindu castes had practically no chance when it came to competing for education. The 'command of the government services, the learned professions, higher education, and even landholding therefore went to the caste Hindus, virtually by default.'¹⁰ The Muslims in the long run became a people without a career. 'Everywhere in Bengal,' wrote Blochmann (Assistant Professor of the Calcutta Madrassah to J. Sutcliffe, the Principal, on 19 October 1871), 'do Mahammadans complain of the "Ingilab-i-zamanah" or "the bad turn of circumstances" and the "ashrafardi" or "the upsetting of respectable classes".'¹¹ A realization of their true power position came to them at a time when they were already far behind the Bengali Hindus in the race for western education which was the passport to government employment. In such a situation, the Bengali Muslims became aware first of their separate communal identity, and realized the value of western education and the necessity of forming associations much earlier than their co-religionists in other parts of India.

A glaring disparity in the all-round development of the Hindu and the Muslim communities became gradually evident. The English-educated intelligentsia composed mainly of Hindus had by the middle of the nineteenth century embarked on the path of constitutional agitation. The Charter Act of 1853, whatever might have been its merits and demerits in other respects, was productive of at least one beneficial effect in India. It had awakened the 'sleeping Leviathan' from amongst a people who for generations had been steeped in lethargy and political stupefaction. The discussions which preceded the passing of Sir Charles Wood's Bill in Parliament gave rise to the most intense agitation amongst all the classes. The people of India for the first time seemed disposed to assert their rights, and in strict constitutional form organized societies, convened public meetings, forwarded petitions to Parliament, and adopted every possible means in their power to lay bare their grievances before the British public. There were in the heart of Calcutta four bodies each undertaking the guardianship of distinct interests, and all professing to have the amelioration of the political condition of the country at heart. The Chamber of Commerce represented the commercial interests of the metropolis; the Trades Association represented the views of a large, respectable and flourishing body of tradesmen; the Indigo Planters' Association protected the interests of the Indigo planters throughout the country; and the British Indian Association established and run by the Bengali aristocracy of wealth and intelligence undertook the guardianship of their respective interests.

Although the membership of the British Indian Association was thrown open to all classes, 'without any distinction of creed, caste or colour', yet in its early years, the Association consisted entirely of Hindus. From 1859 onwards it had Muslim members and from 1864 Muslims sat on its managing committee as well.¹² Meer Mohammed Ali, a landholder in Faridpur, was a member of the executive committee and the first Muslim member to be elected Vice-President of the Association. But in spite of this development in the right direction, the British Indian Association failed to provide a forum for the expression of Muslim public opinion. The followers of Islam during this period were certainly not in a position to

support the programme of the British Indian Association which promoted, among other things, the class interests of the *zamindars* against ryots and favoured open competition and nomination to legislatures from amongst its members. In the altered political conditions of the country the Muslim at length realized that they had distinct interests and special grievances which not only could not be voiced from the existing organizations, but necessitated the creation of a separate body, which would run along parallel though not rival lines. They became aware of the importance of union and the promotion of their interests as a community, and were resolved for the first time to form an association.

On 6 May 1855, a preliminary meeting of the Mahomedan Association or the *Anjuman-i-Islami* was held at the house of Maulavi Muzzhur. It was attended mostly by pleaders, government employees and several eminent Muslims of Calcutta. The occasion for so large an assembly of so many angust and learned individuals was one of uncommon and paramount interest to the Muslim community of this country in general. The principal speaker at the meeting was the editor of the *Durbin*, Mohammad Abdur Rauf, who in course of a speech delivered in Persian, explained why it was absolutely necessary for the Muslims to have a separate organization. In his opinion, the Hindus who had better appreciated the advantages of union than the Muslims, transacted their affairs with comparatively greater ease and facility. He therefore regretted that despite the precepts of their religion to be united, they should be left far behind in the road leading to union. Underlining the damaging character 'of this backwardness he further stated that the interests of the Muslims were neglected for the want of proper opportunities of expressing them. It was therefore deemed necessary, that a large number of influential members of the Muslim community should join in an Association with the laudable purpose of exerting themselves for the good of their fellow Muhamadans.¹³

The specific objects of the Association were laid down as follows :

- (a) As the association was to be formed solely with the view of seeking the interests, and promoting the

general welfare of the Muhammadan community of this country, 'no measures should be adopted that might in any measure appear inimical to the British Government';¹⁴

- (b) it should be an Association, the advantages of which will not be of an exclusive character ;
- (c) nor its exertions confined to the benefit of particular classes of the community at particular times. The interests of the poor and needy should be no less carefully looked after than those of the great.¹⁵

The meeting appointed the principal office-bearers of the *Anjuman* (association) and a 'Special Committee' to frame its rules. Fazlur Rahman, chief of all the Muhammadan Law Officers, was elected President, and Abdul Bari, Qazi for the town of Calcutta, was elected the Vice-President. The 'special committee' consisted of eminent Muslims like Maulavi Mohammed Wajeh, head professor of the Muhammadan College, Maulavi Abdul Samud, the owner of a printing press, Maulavis Abdul Latif Khan and Abdul Jubbur, Munshi Fuzloo Kureem and others. It was indeed significant that once a start was made, it was unanimously decided that printed copies of the proceedings of the meeting, with letters from the Secretaries, should be forwarded to all influential members of the Muhammadan community throughout India.¹⁶

The adoption of the very first resolution noted earlier, regarding the inadvisability of taking up any measure that might appear inimical to the British Government evoked diverse reactions from papers like the *Friend of India* on the one hand, and the *Hindu Intelligencer* and the *Hindu Patriot* two leading Hindu papers of Calcutta on the other. The *Friend of India* noted the different reactions of the Muhammadans and the Hindus. 'It seems to wear the appearance of a proud submission to those with whom they once contended on terms of equality.... It also precluded all idea of any union with the Hindu Association,¹⁷ which altogether repudiates the principle.'¹⁸ The *Hindu Intelligencer* on the other hand was rather caustic about the necessity of this specific object. And the *Hindu Patriot* considered the resolution 'hardly needed'.

The formation of the Mahomedan Association, in close

succession to the others already mentioned, was a significant development in the second half of the nineteenth century, for it stood for the promotion of the exclusive interests of the Muslims as a community. 'The British Indian Association by a resolution dated the 31st January, 1856 rejoiced at its formation. Later on, it acknowledged with thanks the co-operation it received from that body.'¹⁹ Reactions to the formation of the Mahomedan Association in the contemporary Indian and Anglo-Indian press provide an interesting study. The *Hindu Patriot* in its issue of 24 May, 1855 remarked that if the bodies already established did not tend to become 'class' associations then 'we doubt not their united efforts will carry with them a moral strength which cannot fail to be effectual'. Welcoming the inception of the Mahomedan Association, the *Hindu Patriot* remarked: 'We shall watch the proceedings of this infant association with deep interest, not certainly with a view to drag it before a court of justice for its disloyalty, but as an institution of great usefulness and advantage to the community it represents and to the country at large.'²⁰ The *Hindu Intelligencer*, another leading Hindu paper of Calcutta, expressed genuine satisfaction that the Muhammadan community had at last 'bestirred themselves in the cause of social and political union'. If they had done so a century and a half ago, 'their empire might in all probability have stood in fact to this day'. But the paper was rather sceptical of 'the advantages to be derived from the formation of an association' at a time when it would 'hardly be commensurate with the cost of maintaining it.'²¹ Within a couple of months the apprehension of the *Hindu Intelligencer* was borne out at a preliminary meeting of the Anjuman-i-Islami in July 1855. It was pointed out that there were few Muslims in the metropolis who were 'sufficiently rich to afford any substantial pecuniary assistance for carrying out the objects which the Association has in view, for which they must look to their brethren in the provinces, who must, therefore, be made fully acquainted with their intentions.'²² It was accordingly decided to convene a public meeting of the Muslim residents in and about the metropolis, at the Town Hall on 16 July. Wishing every success to the undertaking the *Hindu Intelligencer* advised the Muslims to hold more such public

meetings 'in order to protect their interests and bind them close in social and fraternal bonds'.²³ Another objects of the said meeting was to mobilize public opinion against the alarming role of the Christian missionaries and the support extended to them by the British officials in the country. But on the day of the meeting a mischievous rumour was spread among the Muslim population that the Government intended to convert them to Christianity by force. Consequently, a body of twelve thousand assembled at the Town Hall 'in a state of greatest excitement and the assembly was so uproarious that it was found necessary to dissolve it at once.'²⁴ 'So ended in failure the first attempt of the Muslims of Calcutta to organize a public meeting in the western style on their own. They did not dare to make another such attempt until October 1876.'²⁵ But as a matter of fact a meeting was held on 17 July attended by upwards of four hundred respectable Muhammadans. Maulavi Abdus Samud in eloquent Urdu successfully refuted the arguments of those who objected to the formation of the association on the score of giving offence to the Government and called on the Muhammadans in forcible language to join the Association. Abdur Rauf cited a few of the good effects produced in the state of the country through the exertions of the British Indian Association in order to convince those who doubted the usefulness of associations. Nearly all the Muhammadans present affixed their signatures to a Book which was kept specially for the purpose of enrolling new members.²⁶

The Muslims of Bengal were a backward community by contemporary standards, and according to all shades of opinion. Much has been written on this subject, and statistical evidence for their retarded progress in institutions of higher education would substantiate the above viewpoint. But what demands our special attention, hitherto scarcely taken into consideration, is the fact that as early as 1855, a small nucleus of the Muslim leadership, urban-based, Urdu-educated and comprising mainly the upper classes, were the first to articulate their special grievances when their interests were threatened by a Government measure.

Hardinge's Resolution of 10 October, 1844 instructed all Government departments to give preference to those with

knowledge of English, for Government appointments. The Circular Order of the Court of Sudder Dewanee No. 17, dated 19 July, 1855 laid down that no candidate could be eligible for examination without possessing a knowledge of English. This change in the policy of officialdom and the rapid swing from preference to English to making it obligatory, within a decade, hit the Muslims of Bengal hardest. As the *Anjuman-i-Islami* had not been properly organized till then, a private meeting was called on 4 September 1855, at the house of Maulavi Abdus Samud. At the latter's instance, the *Anjuman* was declared to be formally 'constituted and established', at least ten days earlier than originally scheduled, as immediate measures had to be taken by the Association 'to cure the defects so detrimental' to the Muslim community. A lengthy petition was addressed to the Lieutenant-Governor, F. J. Malliday, requesting the above-mentioned order of the judicial authorities to be rescinded. Based on a judicious survey of past and present developments, this petition may be characterized as a historical document from the point of view of Muslim interests. It was indeed the first of its kind, and in view of its merit, extracts from the original text have been reproduced below.

The Circular Order in the opinion of the petitioners was 'calculated to inflict a grievous injury upon a large body' of the Muslims. It was inferrable that the great majority of the Muhammadan students who were 'but imperfectly, or not at all acquainted with English, will not be admitted to the ensuing Examination for the office of Vakel, or if admitted, will fail to pass in the English books now prescribed...' It was further complained that the acquisition of English was never up to that time 'made obligatory on any section of the Community'. Moreover the Muslims were also denied till then sufficient facilities for the acquisition of a competent knowledge of English. Referring to the measures undertaken by the authorities a few months earlier to impart a suitable education to the Muhammadans, it was stated that if those efforts were vigorously followed up by corresponding provisions, then the Muhammadans 'will no longer have cause to lament a deficiency of means' and 'will be in a situation, after the lapse of a sufficient time to compete on equal terms with persons of other classes at Examinations conducted in English, to test

the qualifications of candidates for public employ'. The petitioners pointed out that the requirements of the Court's Circular will 'materially injure the prospects and condition of the rising generation' who will find it increasingly difficult to maintain themselves at the seat of education with the means of their parents 'permanently reduced by the measure about to be enforced'. Moreover, that class of Muhammadans who had till then maintained a respectable station by virtue of their service under the Government, would also 'be sunk and depressed to the lowest level, to the manifest injury of the State'. The petitioners finally concluded by an appeal that they desired '*no exclusive privileges but merely a fair field...*'²⁷

The *Hindoo Patriot* supported the Mahomedan Association by protesting against the orders which would debar educated Muslims from entering the higher branches of the profession of law. 'It involved a principle of far higher importance than would, at first sight, appear,' contended the paper. 'The question was not whether by making English compulsory, the efficiency of the profession of law would be raised, but whether 'the virtual exclusion of an entire class of the population from enjoyment of certain civil rights of a valuable kind is accordant with justice and sound policy. Official men view the matter in the former light, the country in the latter'. To institute tests of qualification for office was in the opinion of the *Hindu Patriot* 'neither just nor politic', though it readily admitted that an acquaintance with the English language was a valuable qualification for the Indian, especially the legal employee. The paper, therefore, regretted that this qualification was found much less among the Muhammadans than was desirable. 'An inappreciation of this knowledge has always marked the conduct and aspirations of their educated youth', ruefully remarked the *Patriot*.²⁸ The *Friend of India* had originally opposed the petition and had remarked: 'No recent measure has excited more animadversion.' 'It was considered a step backwards and the Lieutenant-Governor was loudly condemned for yielding to the petitions of the most ignorant class in India.' The alteration was decried as 'a concession to a single creed and that creed the one which has shown the least disposition to progress.'²⁹ But later on the paper turned round and justified the concession, as the 'injustice' of the

order 'was clear and its expediency doubtful'. The Association scored an impressive victory when Halliday, who was known to be generally sympathetic to Muslim interests, readily granted the request of the petitioners.

A retrospective analysis of the petition under consideration reveals the fact that the Muslims did not commence their political career by demanding 'exclusive privileges', but rather sought 'a fair field' to compete on equal terms. Fully conscious of their handicapped position, they couched a memorial assertive in tone, impartial in spirit and rational in approach. Even more creditable was perhaps the performance of the *Hindoo Patriot* which made common cause with the petitioners, and was eloquent in its protests on behalf of their Muslim brethren. Having been able to rise above narrow prejudices and selfish interests, it unhesitatingly condemned a Government measure which affected the Muslims alone. It took the right approach in pointing out to the Muslims the mistake of not appreciating the benefits of English education and congratulated the Government when it took steps to remove a legitimate grievance of the former. Spontaneously, the beginning was made in the right direction.

Encouraged by the success attending its first petition to the authorities, the Association convened a General Meeting at the premises of Munshi Gholam Safdar on 28 October, 1855. The proceedings of this meeting recorded certain significant developments. The Association already counted eighty-five members who were residents of Calcutta and its suburbs and forty-one from the *mofussil*. The money subscribed by all these members was sufficient 'to defray all the present expenses of this institution, and to keep it in operation'. Hundreds of copies of pamphlets containing the rules of the Association and the reports of the several meetings held were 'circulated throughout India'. When news of the formation of the Anjuman reached the districts, two branch institutions came to be established at Sylhet and Midnapur with the most respectable representatives of the Muhammadan community. Meanwhile the 'Special Committee' which had been appointed in May 1855 gave way to a regular 'Committee of Management'. It was at this meeting, however, that two important proposals were made. Abdur Rauf suggested that the committee

of management should open correspondence with the British Indian Association, the Indigo Planters' Association, and the Chamber of Commerce with a view to future collaboration or co-operation. Another member of the committee, Abdul Latif Khan, who may be regarded as the protagonist of Muslim modernism in Bengal, touched a problem which was basic to the Muslims of Bengal, and was destined to be the chief subject of parley between the bureaucracy and its Muslim subjects in the post-Mutiny period. Latif contended that 'the defective education of Mahomedans generally of this country is the main cause why they obtained so little advancement in the service of the Government, and are promoted to so few offices of honour and responsibility, and not only in the services of the Government, but also in other walks of life.' It was therefore the duty of the Association to ascertain the precise nature of such defects, how best to remedy them, and to suggest such measures as may secure to the community better education in future. All the members present concurred in these opinions and the matter was referred to the Committee of management for investigation and report.³⁰ Thus even before the emergence of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in the United Provinces as an educational reformer on behalf of his co-religionists, the Muslims of Bengal had already begun to go their own way in organization and the policy.

Besides addressing a few memorials to the authorities on such subjects as the unsatisfactory state of the profession in *mukhtiar* (attorney) and the order of the Inspector of jails in Lower Bengal requiring every criminal prisoner to have his head and face close shaved once every fortnight, 'the Anjuman-i-Islami did precious little before the revolt broke out in May 1857'.³¹ Scarcely seventeen days had expired since the outbreak of the rebellion, when a special meeting of the *Anjuman* was convened on 27 May 1857, at which resolutions condemning the Mutiny, 'caused by the foolishness of a set of ambitious men' and pledging the Association's loyalty and support to the British Government were passed. The Association expressed its gratification 'at observing the promptitude and energy with which the Government has adopted the most efficacious means for the repression of this short-lived rebellion, and the restoration of tranquillity and order'. In order

to prevent the dissemination of 'an unfounded impression' among the Muslims that the Government sought to interfere with their religious principles and practices, the Association decided to distribute printed copies of the proceedings to every member of the Association residing in Calcutta and its neighbourhood. A sufficient number of copies were also to be transmitted to the branch associations 'in order to give the present proceedings every possible publicity to the professors of the Muhammadan faith'.³² The services of some of the leaders of the Association like Qazi Abdul Bari were utilized by British officials in order to tranquillize Muslim public opinion in Calcutta during the crisis. It may be interesting at this point to anticipate that years later Maulavi Karamat Ali of Jaunpur came to the Mahomedan Literary Society in 1870 to preach that British India was a *Dar-ul-Islam* and it was therefore unlawful to preach a *jihad* against it.³³ Abdul Latif, who was the initiator of the above meeting might have consciously or unconsciously followed the precedent set by the *Anjuman* thirteen years earlier.

At a time when the Revolt was causing havoc and destruction in some of the towns of the North-Western Province, the Muslims of Bengal had actually begun publicly denouncing the Mutiny on the one hand, and setting their co-religionists on a path of loyalism to the British Government on the other. But the credit for this orientation of Muslim thought and activism from alienation to acceptance of the British rule, is usually given to Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, who came out with these views in public only after the rebellion had been crushed. On 14 November 1858, a general meeting was held in the rooms of the Association (N9-1 Maulavi Emdad Ali's Lane, Taltala) to consider the propriety of addressing Her Majesty, the Queen Empress, on her assuming the Government of India. The meeting was attended by a considerable number of the leading members of the Muhammadan society.³⁴ In March 1859, the members of the Mahomedan Association submitted an Address to the Queen on the subject of Her Majesty's Proclamation of 1 November 1858, with an assurance of their earnest wish to co-operate according to their means and ability for aid 'in fulfilling the Gracious Will and Pleasure of the Queen'.³⁵ Probably the last act of the *Anjuman*

was the presentation of a valedictory address to Halliday.³⁶ After 1859 the absence of any memorial or address drawn up by, or any direct or indirect reference to the Mahomedan Association leads to the obvious conclusion. Possibly, with the foundation of the Mahomedan Literary Society by Abdul Latif in 1863, and its gradual coming into prominence, the name of the first major political organization of the Muslims was scarcely ever recalled by the new generation.

The Mahomedan Association, from the very fact of its being the earliest political organization of the Muslims had made a staggering start and after a short-lived career sank into oblivion, precisely when and why it may be difficult to find out. In judging this infant association it should be borne in mind that the *Anjuman* 'lacked the necessary educational or popular bases to sustain its activity'. The number of English-educated Muslims who had an adequate appreciation of modern politics was exceedingly small in Calcutta, or elsewhere in the country. Most of the leaders of the *Anjuman* had not struck very deep roots into the soil of Bengal. The proceedings of the Association, significantly enough, were invariably carried on in Persian or Urdu.³⁷ Without the requisite western education, the *Anjuman* failed to evolve a concrete political programme as was done by its contemporary the British Indian Association. In fact, the Association suffered more by comparison to the other leading political organizations of the day conducted on a much more advanced level by the western-educated Hindu intelligentsia. At best the *Anjuman* could deal with the vital interests of a particular class of Muslims inasmuch as they were affected by Government legislation. As a matter of fact, one such attempt was eminently successful as has already been noted earlier. But the failure to adopt an integrative approach in view of the strong ethnic, linguistic, regional and cultural lines which cut across sectarian denominations among the Muslims, rendered the chances of united action among themselves, and even the problem of adjustment to modern conditions all the more difficult. Moreover, what was peculiar to Islam alone was that even when the Muslims had begun to progress slowly along western lines, the religious element remained a decisive factor in their political orientation. Had it not been for this essentially Islamic substance

of Muslim thought and activism, their progress along modern lines might have been spared the stumbling-blocks along a tortuous way.

Very little has so far been written on the earliest political organization of the Muslims, either because its importance has been underrated or because of the absence of sufficient source material. But a proper study of the political development of the Bengali Muslims in the second half of the nineteenth century cannot be made either by ignoring or by minimizing the activities of their premier institution. Established on the eve of the Revolt of 1857, the Mahomedan Association represented the first generation of Muslim leaders, most of whom though not conversant with western education, were yet fully alive to the exigencies of the time. This infant Association rendered pioneering services, by pointing out the future course of Muslim political activism. What really marked out this select little group of enlightened Muslims of Calcutta was the absence in them of a spirit of defeatism. Instead they were quite prepared to accept that their relative ignorance was due more to their 'own negligence than to the hatred, prejudice, or ill will of others'. Significantly enough, the Muslims of a slightly later date learnt to explain their backwardness in terms of lack of Government patronage and opposition from the more advanced sections, viz., the Hindus, as the case turned out to be. Having taken the initiative in founding an association, the conveners minimized the chances of opposition by pointing out that they were only pursuing the true path pointed out by their religion. Bearing in mind that every activity, individual or collective, in the Islamic world bears a religious character by reason of its being governed by Islamic law, the work of founding a separate association for the Muslims was from the very beginning given a religious sanction. An analysis of the aims and objects of the Association proves that it was indeed creditable on the part of the organizers that even before the outbreak of the Revolt, they desired the Muslims to follow the path of loyalism, did not claim exclusive advantages for themselves (which was particularly significant in the light of future developments) and last but not the least, expressed a pious wish to keep the interests of the poor majority sincerely in mind.

The decision to establish a separate political association for the Muslims was, however, a significant pointer to the past relations and the shape of things to come. Though the social relations between the Hindus and the Muslims underwent no radical change at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the political outlook of the two communities was very different from the beginning. Muslim political ideas came to be generally inspired by the consideration of purely Muslim interests. As the Hindus had a start of at least half a century over the Muslims in their political evolution, it would have implied an act of great sacrifice on the part of the Muslims as a backward and a minority community to join the Hindu in their political demands. It was indeed a sad accident of history that though 'subject to the same foreign rule, suffering from the same disabilities, and seeking the same remedies or reforms',³⁸ the leadership on both the sides displayed a lamentable lack of farsightedness which could not but be regretted at a later date. They failed to present a united front in politics and meet on a common political platform. The political exclusiveness of the two communities was more convincingly demonstrated by the fact that the Muslims did not take any active part in the different political organizations of the country. On the contrary, they started separate organizations of their own as soon as they became politically conscious. It is not without significance that the Hindus regarded this separatist tendency as quite natural in view of the position of the Muslim community as a separate unit.

The above factors notwithstanding, a fusion of the two communities was not an impossible ideal. But the Muslims started their political career with a separate political organization. Instead they could have walked hand in hand with the Hindus and others in perfect harmony as long as their own special interests were not threatened. The most eminent Hindu political leaders on their part, failed to understand the real feelings and grievances of the Muslim community and to appreciate the motives which guided their policy and action. 'In their new-born zeal for democracy and nationalism the Hindus forgot that a large section of the people, for very good reasons refused to accept these ideals.'³⁹ The conglom-

merate effect of these developments was that the Mahomedan Association with its affiliate branches set the trend of Muslim politics not exactly on communal but rather along separatist lines which led to the formation of similar organizations in the years to follow. But what started as an innocuous separatist movement without being inimical to the interests of the other communities, fell in course of time a victim to the bureaucratic game of divide and rule, and to the vested interests of those who derived the greatest benefit from driving a wedge between the two communities.

Encouraged by these developments, it perhaps suited the purpose of a paper like *Friend of India* (which never spared an opportunity to play up one community against the other) to remark that 'in all movements which the Hindus have made of late years in opposition to their present rulers and in all those appeals which have been preferred by them against particular measures, though the grievances put forward were common to both classes, the Mohammedans have never united with them on any occasion;⁴⁰ and as the Mohammedans are by far the most independent, and united, as well as redoubtable section of the community,—however disproportionate in numbers—this circumstance has always served in no small degree to weaken the representations of the Hindoos.'⁴¹ In its issue of 17 May 1855, the same paper remarked that there was a time not fifty years ago, when such associations would have been viewed with feelings of the deepest jealousy by Government and when no public meetings of any kind or description could be held in the metropolis without the sanction of the Governor-General. 'But we have changed all this; the spirit of freedom has supplanted the spirit of restrictions and we are certain that the Government instead of being weakened by such associations is stronger and more consolidated than ever,... in an age of Associations, the more they are multiplied, the less will be the official embarrassment occasioned by them; and in one aspect, it may be said that they will serve as a counterpoise to each other.' Significantly enough, the above view expressed an awareness at a very early date of the 'divide and rule' theory which was later actively resorted to and became part and parcel of the Government policy. The conjunction of factors and the course of events

whereby the Mahomedan Association serving as a 'counterpoise' to the British Indian Association, in course of the next fifty years led to the formation of the Muslim League at Dacca in 1906 to serve as a 'counterpoise' to the Indian National Congress, form the subject-matter of the following chapters.

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² Minute of Warren Hastings, January, 1785. Quoted in *Tracts Education 1831-90*. 'A paper on Mahomedan Education in Bengal' read by Maulavie Abdool Luteef Khan Bahadur, at the Second Session of the Bengal Social Science Association, on 30 January 1868 (Calcutta, 1868).

³ Anisuzzaman, *Muslim Manas O Bangla Sahitya* (Calcutta, 1971), p. 20.

⁴ *Friend of India*, 8 May 1856.

⁵ W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans* (London, 1876), p. 148.

⁶ Quoted in B. B. Majumdar, *Indian Political Association and Reform of Legislature, 1818-1917* (Calcutta, 1965), p. 26.

⁷ Ram Gopal, *Indian Muslims—A Political History (1858-1947)* (Bombay, 1959), p. 15.

⁸ B. B. Majumdar, *op. cit.* p. 218.

⁹ Mustafa Nurul Islam, *Bengali Muslim Public Opinion As Reflected in the Bengali Press, 1901-1930* (Dacca, 1973), p. 178.

¹⁰ J. M. Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society—Twentieth Century Bengal* (Bombay, 1968), p. 44.

¹¹ *Education Progs. August 1872*, quoted in Pradip Sinha, *Nineteenth Century Bengal. Aspects of Social History* (Calcutta, 1965), pp. 51-52.

¹² *Englishman*, 15 September, 1859, quoted in S. R. Mehrotra. *The Emergence of the Indian National Congress* (Delhi, 1971), p. 148.

¹³ *Hindoo Patriot*, 31 May, 1855, reporting speech of Maulavi Mohemed Abdoor-roowf delivered in Persian at the Preliminary Meeting of the

Mahomedan Association held on 6 May 1855.

¹⁴ *Friend of India*, 17 May, 1855.

¹⁵ *Hindoo Patriot*, 31 May, 1855.

¹⁶ *Hindu Intelligencer*, 14 May, 1855, vide Appendix C for a list of committee and ordinary members of the Mahomedan Association.

¹⁷ There was a tendency among some Anglo-Indian Papers, perhaps as an act of deliberate policy, to dub organizations like the British Indian Association, though non-communal in character as 'Hindu Associations'.

¹⁸ *Friend of India*, 17 May, 1855.

¹⁹ B. B. Majumdar, op. cit. p. 76.

²⁰ *Hindoo Patriot*, 24 May, 1855.

²¹ *Hindu Intelligencer*, 14 May, 1855.

²² *Hindu Intelligencer*, 9 July, 1855.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ *Friend of India*, 26 July, 1855, quoted in Mehrotra, op. cit. p. 214.

²⁵ *Hindoo Patriot*, 9 October, 1876. Significantly enough this meeting was held to sympathize with Turkey. Comment quoted in Mehrotra, op. cit. p. 214.

²⁶ *Hindu Intelligencer*, 30 July, 1855.

²⁷ *Hindoo Patriot*, 27 September 1855.

²⁸ *Hindoo Patriot*, 27 September, 1855.

²⁹ *Friend of India*, 11 October, 1855.

³⁰ *Hindu Intelligencer*, 5 November, 1855.

³¹ Mehrotra, op. cit. p. 215.

³² J. K. Majumdar (ed.), *Indian Speeches and Documents on British Rule, 1821-1918* (Calcutta, 1937), pp. 67-69.

³³ See my Chapter IV for further details.

³⁴ *Home Public Consultation. 1 April 1859, No. 35-37, Abstract Report of the Progs. of the General Meeting.*

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Mehrotra, op. cit. p. 216.

³⁷ Mehrotra, op. cit. p. 216.

³⁸ R. C. Majumdar (ed.), *British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance* (Bombay, 1965), vol. X, part II, p. 297.

³⁹ Ibid. p. 331.

⁴⁰ The above may be cited as an example of deliberate misrepresentation of facts. Mentioned below are a couple of instances of Hindu-Muslim joint action during the said period. (a) the petitions against the Jury Act of 1827, signed by Hindus and Muslims at the instance of Raja Ram Mohun Roy, were submitted to both the Houses of Parliament; (b) in 1840 as many as 2,113 persons belonging to the Hindu, Muslim and Parsee communities addressed a petition to the Bombay Government against conversion, B. B. Majumdar, op. cit. p.15; (c) in 1829, Hindu and Muslim *zamindars* jointly petitioned Bentinck protesting against resumption proceedings A. F. Salahuddin Ahmad, *Essays* op. cit. p. 642.

⁴¹ *Friend of India* (17 May, 1855, vol. xxi).

Neo-Modernism *vis-a-vis* Loyalism

The Role of Nawab Abdul Latif

The so-called 'Wahhabi' uprisings and similar movements in the early nineteenth century survived their military collapse in 1831 and subsequently played a great role in the fermentation of the Revolt of 1857. Historians like R. C. Majumdar,¹ Surendra Nath Sen² and P. Hardy³ point out that there is little evidence that the followers of Sayyid Ahmad Bareilly took a direct part in British India proper, and as an organized brotherhood, in the rising of 1857. But it appears a little curious that this violently anti-British militant organization should have practically kept aloof from the great revolutionary movement of 1857. Scholars like Qeyammuddin Ahmad, Zia-ul-Hassan Faruqi and K. M. Ashraf believe that the impact of Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed and his followers resulted in a great revival of Muslim enthusiasm that proved to be 'the chief sustaining power' of the insurrection in 1857. 'It is true', wrote Dr Ahmad, 'that they (*Wahhabis*) did not join hands with the leaders of the Movement but their Frontier party, under Enayet Ali, constantly fought against the English during the period.'⁴ 'By keeping low the *Wahhabis* survived the violent storm of 1857-59. The Patna centre lived on active and energetic as before, and rendered invaluable services during the Ambala Campaign of 1863—the severest opposition presented by the *Wahhabis*.'⁵ Faruqi finds 'a strong religious strand' in the final attempt in 1857 to drive the British out of India, and also a large body of *ulema* 'who were very active in the days of 1857 and played a prominent role in providing the Rebellion with a consistent anti-British

ideology together with a religious fervour which has, sometimes, led people to read a revivalist trend in the great uprising'.⁶ The *Wahhabis* were the only people who came not only armed with a consistent anti-British ideology but also with the backing of a network of organized centres and a moral influence on the Muslim intelligentsia throughout the country, remarked Ashraf. An anti-British stand as the only true path a Muslim could follow, irrespective of the fact whether he was an *Wahhabi* or not, was also the symbol of the Muslim spirit of 1857. It is no wonder, therefore, if the British authorities considered them a persistently belligerent class and 'a source of permanent danger to the Empire'.⁷

The Revolt of 1857 was the outburst of a long, accumulated discontent in various quarters from different factors for which the new masters of the country were thought to be responsible. It represented a complex reaction of the Hindus and the Muslims of the subcontinent against the usurpation of political power by the East India Company, and a violent attempt on their part to rehabilitate the old indigenous order in place of the new one imposed by the British. Starting originally as a mutiny of the sepoys, the rising in certain areas like United Provinces and Bihar, became a popular outbreak for the purpose of extirpating the British Raj. But for most British observers in 1857, 'it was Muslim intrigue and Muslim leadership that converted a sepoy mutiny into a political conspiracy, aimed at the extinction of the British Raj'. The standing Rebel Camp maintained by the *Wahhabis* on the frontier for decades and a chronic conspiracy within the Empire increased the hatred of the Englishmen towards the Muslims in India. The British saw the Muslims as a source of constant trouble. The rallying of some of the mutineers around the aged Bahadur Shah II, the last of the Mughal emperors, convinced many of the Britishers that the real danger to their rule came from the Muslims. 'It is difficult to explain the view', wrote Thompson and Garratt, 'held almost universally amongst the British that the "mild Hindu" was suffering from some temporary aberration, but that the Muslim was our implacable foe'.⁸ Evidence left by contemporary British officials as well as actual occurrences in certain cases went further to crystallize the anti-Muslim attitude of the British rulers. An

extract from William Russell's *My Indian Mutiny Diary* aptly summed up the contemporary attitude. 'The fact is', wrote Russell, 'that the Mahomedan element in India is that which causes us most trouble and provokes the largest share of our hostility. Our missionaries make no progress in the Mussulman districts. Our religious and educational movements are watched by the Moulavies and fanatics with the greatest suspicion; above all, the recollection of the days when the Mahomedans were paramount is more recent and active in their minds than the memory of Hindu glories among the Brahmin Rajputs. We do not tread on the feet of the latter so often and so heavily as on those of the former.... They are unquestionably more dangerous to our role.'⁹

To maintain that the Revolt was the work of the Muslims alone would be to minimize the achievements of heroes like Kunwar Singh (d. 1858) of Bihar, the Rani of Jhansi (d. 1858), Tantia Topi (1819-59) and Nana Sahib (1820-59), the adopted son of the Peshwa, who were all Hindus. The civil risings in Oudh, Bihar and Central India were mostly Hindu-led. The majority of the rebellious *talukdars* of Oudh were Hindu. The Bengal Army which mutinied was predominantly Hindu in character and was recruited on the eve of the uprising from the Hindu-majority areas like Oudh, North and South Bihar (principally Shahabad and Bhojpur), the Ganges-Jamuna Doab and Rohilkhand.¹⁰ An objective analysis of the movement proves that in its first outburst and continuance the Insurrection of 1857 was neither exclusively of Muhammadan nor of Hindu contriving as was respectively held by the contemporary British historians and diarists, and by the later historians who started describing the Mutiny more as a Hindu revolt or as a counter-revolution against the forces of Western civilization. The observations of Sir George Campbell, written in July and August 1857, when the conflict was at its height, categorically pointed to the fact that the revolt was not a general Muslim movement against the British. The rebellion was essentially Hindustani in character, a rebellion of previously dominant classes both Hindu and Muslim, in the North-Western Provinces 'who have been rejected by us.' 'The Mohamedans', Campbell thought, 'behaved better than might have been expected, considering their antecedents and

position; and that the result, far from bringing to light a chronic Mahomedan conspiracy, has been to show that we have not in that class of our subjects that formidable danger that has been sometimes apprehended.' He pointed out that 'the Muslim communities most given to religious fanaticism, the *Faraizis* in Bengal and the Mappillas in South India had not stirred.'¹¹ As a matter of fact the lack of homogeneity within the Muslim community itself to some extent explains why the Muslims of Bengal, despite their manifold sufferings under the British rule, did not side with the rebels of 1857. The Nawabs of Dacca and Murshidabad remained loyal and the elite Muslim society in Calcutta denounced the Mutiny in no uncertain terms. The quiescence of the Muslims in Bengal was only matched by the active loyalty to the British of those in the Punjab.

A comparative study of the *Wahliabi* movement and the Mutiny of 1857 shows that it was the way in which the respective interests of the Hindus and the Muslims were affected that largely determined the character of the two movements. The establishment of British rule in India was looked upon by the followers of the Prophet fundamentally as the challenge of Christianity to Islam. Consequently the call for *jihad* given by the *Wahhabis* was religiously inspired, revivalistic in character and was motivated by an anti-British (also anti-Sikh) sentiment. 'The programme elaborated by the *Wahhabis* and by the theorists of Deoband, was of higher generality, founded on the common duties of all true believers in the *Dar-ul-harb* to band together for a political no less than a religious aim. But if this was an all-India movement, it was of an old-fashioned sort, likely to appeal to special tastes. 'Seeking to march backwards with fire and sword to the good old days of Aurangzeb, they were unlikely to attract those three-quarters of the population who were Hindu.'¹² But the Revolt of 1857 was a significant departure from the early nineteenth century campaigns of Islamization. It represented a united effort on the part of the Hindus and Muslims bound by a common hatred of the British to redress their grievances through an armed uprising. The revolt was thus not Islamic in origin, in the sense that the *Wahhabi* movement was, although there was a simultaneous appeal to the religious sentiments of the Hindus

and Muslims to exhort them to rise against the British power. The best proof of the above evaluation may be furnished by the fact that the Rebellion of 1857 served as a source of inspiration to the Indian patriots of the succeeding generations in their struggle for the country's freedom. The heroic exploits of its leaders formed the theme of vernacular literature. But in striking contrast the *Wahhabi* and the affiliate movements in a collective sense, and the examples set by such eminent leaders as Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed, Titu Mir, Dudu Miyan, Enayat Ali and others, many of whom had actually staked their lives for the country's freedom remained in oblivion in the heyday of the Indian national movement.

The Revolt of 1857-58 marked a turning-point in Indian history and produced significant consequences in many ways. With its suppression the long line of Mughal rulers in India came to an end, and all hopes of recovering Muslim hegemony were dashed to the ground. The rule of the East India Company was terminated with India being declared a colony of the British Crown. Force which so long constituted the basis of the British rule in India was substituted by a policy of conciliation mainly based on promises of equality of treatment. The Queen's Proclamation of 1 November 1858 was the first manifestation of this changed spirit. But at the same time there was a loud cry for vengeance and ruthless suppression of the mutineers in the British press, in certain quarters in England and among the British officers in India. The post-Mutiny anti-Muslim feeling, combined with the revulsion at the Ottoman conduct in Armenia and other places, and a religious ambition to advance Christianity in the East, resulted in a spate of anti-Islamic utterances. The *Morning Post* exclaimed that the 'British Empire in India shall endure if for no other reason than for the purpose of exterminating and rooting out from the face of the earth Mahomedan and Brahmanical demons.'¹³ On the other hand, enlightened Indians and Englishmen in India realized the dangers arising from the total exclusion of Indians from the law-making machinery of the country. If the Indian Councils Act of 1861, enacted largely as a measure of caution against future dangers marked the beginning of a new chapter of British administration in India, the cruelties and repression associated with the sup-

pression of the Revolt left poignant memories in some Indian minds and were to some extent responsible for the subsequent extremism in Indian politics.¹⁴

Against the background of the post-1857 era, three distinctive strands of reaction and development may be studied separately—the attitude of the British bureaucracy, the response of the educated Bengali intelligentsia and the reaction of the urban Muslim elite. The militancy of the *Wahhabi-Faraizi* movements and the effects of 1857 profound long-term effects on British political strategy in India. After the initial spurt of ruthless repression of the guilty, British policy towards the Indian Muslims had a twofold objective. What W. W. Hunter, a top Bengal civilian, recommended and the Government of India later followed as a policy was 'to segregate the distempered class' by detaching from it the sympathies of the general Muhammadan community. The British saw that by offering 'a judicious mixture of buffets and boons' to the 'better-class' Muslims who were alarmed by the reformist movements, they would be able 'to isolate and contain the actively disaffected'.¹⁵ On the other hand, aware new of the precariousness of their rule, British policy consciously rested on the 'old safeguard' of 'divide and rule' between the Hindu and Muslim communities, by weaning away the more important portions of the latter from an attitude of resentment to one of reconciliation. 'But it took the trauma of the Mutiny and Rebellion of 1857-58 to open up these political perspectives.'¹⁶ Long before the actual execution of this policy, the concept of ruling India by holding one community against the other was embedded in British political genius and found expression from time to time in official and non-official statements. As early as 1831, Sir Lionel Smith remarked that 'the effect of education will be to do away with all the prejudices of sects and religions by which we have hitherto kept the country—the Mussulmans against Hindus, and so on.'¹⁷ Even when the Mutiny was raging at its height, the *Saturday Review* wisely predicted that 'our old safeguard, the conflict of faiths, the mutual mistrust of Hindoo and Mahomedan, will soon be working again mightily in our favour.'¹⁸ The lesson of the revolt was that the divisions in India were not to be taken for granted, and the possibility of

a union of the 'twin fanaticisms' of caste and Islam in the future began to haunt the British minds. This lesson the British did not fail to learn and sought to carry out by keeping the religious temperature of India as low as possible. Thereby 'there was scope for what the British believed to be the natural antagonisms of Indian society, principally those between Islam and Hinduism, to produce a need for an impartial umpire, namely the British government.'¹⁹ Though British statesmen from the time of the Mutiny down to the eighties of the last century were aware that any deliberate attempt to stir up religious and communal antagonisms was found to 'recoil' on themselves, yet their suave intention to 'balance and rule' actually turned out in practice to be a wisely calculated and diplomatic move to 'divide and rule'. It was not as Hardy maintained: 'To balance and rule, not to divide and rule, was the instinctive British approach to politics in India.'²⁰ The Mutiny was possible because racial and communal prejudices were not kept alive in the composition of the Bengal Army. The Peel Commission which was appointed in 1859 was impressed with the evidence that the real 'weakness of the Bengal Army lay in the absence of racial prejudice and communal exclusiveness'.²¹ The lessons of the movement convinced the British Government of the need of immediate reorganization of the Army. The main idea which henceforth dominated the British military policy in India for at least the next fifty years was that of 'division and counterpoise'. The reorganization of the army on a communal basis was a fitting prelude to the policy of special consideration and separate treatment of the backward Muslims that was to follow. In another direction, British policy initiated by Canning after 1857, which remained alive for the rest of the century, and often became prominent was 'to create an Indian aristocracy of wealth and influence' which 'would have the ancillary effect of lessening the bitterness of race relations and serve as a bulwark of the empire'. But 'it was a policy which had no potential'. Because the future lay with the educated middle classes who were eager to take advantage of the universities set up in the very year of the outbreak of the mutiny, and not 'with the loyalty of men who belonged to the past and who

sought to harness the rising of 1857 in the cause of that past'.²²

The aristocratic and bourgeois-intellectual society of Bengal *en masse*, was loud in its denunciation of the Revolt and louder still in its profession of loyalty to the British regime. The apathetic attitude of the Bengali intelligentsia to the Mutiny of 1857 cannot be explained according to Benoy Ghose 'only by the mid-nineteenth century "loyalty" of the intelligentsia'. 'To support the rebels and their cause would have amounted at that time to a negation of all principles and ideals for which the intelligentsia had fought for over half a century....The new middle classes created under British rule saw no hope in the 1857 revolt...and thought it more prudent in their own class interest to follow them (British rulers) than to back the wrong "feudal" horse. Out of this came their unequivocal condemnation of the rebels of 1857'.²³ The post-Mutiny era in Bengal witnessed the development of a bolder political philosophy by the English-educated Bengali intelligentsia who had their firm faith pinned on constitutional agitation. The inevitable product of this new phenomenon was a definite demand in the sixties and the seventies of the nineteenth century for a representative and responsible government, voiced among others by W. C. Bonnerjea, Surendra Nath Banerjea, Ananda Mohan Bose and Kristodas Pal. Meanwhile, a new turn was given to the whole concept of nationalism in Bengal in the sixties. The Anglophil mentality of the young firebrands of the Hindu College gave way to a new current of Hindu nationalism which was partly the result of the development of Indology. This new-born Hindu consciousness in and around the metropolis of Calcutta, almost coincided with an earlier 'revival of the spirit of Islam' in rural Bengal, and a simultaneous articulation of 'a distinct and exclusive identity' by the urban-based Muslim élite. Under these circumstances, it was but inevitable that community-consciousness came to be based on religion despite the development of the two principal communities along essentially secular lines.

The miscarried uprising of 1857 and the *Wahhabi* trials completed the ruin of that section of the diehard Muslims who sought for the last time to overthrow what in their

opinion represented a *Dar-ul-harb*. To the humiliation of defeat was added the discomfiture of retaliation. It might do well to remember as has been pointed out by Hardy, but what is generally tended to be overlooked, that the call to wreak a special vengeance upon Muslims 'was not heeded at the very summit of the British government in India'. It is true, however, that Muslims in the North-Western Provinces in the decades after the rising lost the overwhelming advantages in official favour which they had enjoyed before 1857. But at the same time they 'survived as a major social and economic interest in northern India, depressed in spirit and with their own image of themselves shattered.... They were not destroyed as a weight in the religious, social and political balance in British India.'²⁴ The educated and the enlightened among the Muslims were at last forced to realize that they 'could have a future, but not on their own terms', as the British in India had come to stay. The events of 1857 however had little effect upon the fortunes of Muslims outside the North-Western Provinces. 'In so far as the Panjabi Muslim was faithful to the British he gained in grants of land and in so far as the Bengali Muslim was standing aloof from British education he continued to suffer exclusion from official employment.'²⁵

A policy of withdrawal from the reformatory changes ushered in by the alien rulers of the country brought to prominent relief a painful awareness of Muslim backwardness in Bengal. Muslim community-consciousness was further sharpened by the realization that the Bengali Hindu intelligentsia was already way ahead of them in terms of western learning and Government employment, a state of affairs that became particularly alarming for the Muslims from 1851 onwards. The western-educated Hindus had already reached a point of progress from which there could be no return, whereas the Muslims in Bengal due to causes already enumerated had remained static at a point from where there could be no sudden leap forward. It was this vital gap that could not be ultimately bridged because of separatist tendencies manifest on both sides. The history of the next half a century shows how this gap continued to widen till at last Indian politics assumed a communal complexion. Prior to the outbreak of the Revolt in 1857, the

Muslims of Bengal were confronted with a set of historical antecedents which would not let them remain apathetic. It was a negative reaction to the educational measures undertaken by the Company that aroused the Muslims to a consciousness of their elemental rights and interests. The futility of protests and the ruinous consequences of an inopportune and ill-advised policy at length taught the Muslims the wisdom of active participation in the significant developments of the time. Whereas in the North-Western Provinces the Muslims were impressed with the necessity of learning English because it was the language of the rulers, in Bengal a knowledge of English was linked up with the question of Muslim survival. Besides, faced with a tough competition from the English-knowing Hindus, the Muslims of Bengal saw the need to learn the language earlier than their brethren in other parts of India. As a result, the Bengali Muslims from the very beginning developed an independent line of thought and action. The above may also explain the anomalous developments of the Hindus and the Muslims of Bengal in the second half of the nineteenth century. While the former received western education first and founded associations later, the latter established their first political association, the *Anjuman-i-Islami*, as early as 1855 and from its platform pleaded with their co-religionists to accept western learning.

In the North-Western Provinces however, there was a complete reversal of the situation in Bengal. There the Pathans, Mughals and Sayyids who claimed descent from the conquerors were far more numerous than in the outlying province of Bengal. The Muhammadans as a class belonged to the middle and higher strata, and of the rural Muslims many were landlords, whereas in Bengal the typical Muslim was a poor peasant. The overhaul of the administration in upper India had been much less drastic than in Bengal. Urdu, the medium of Muslim education, remained the language of administration. Consequently, the Muslims remained entrenched in the public services. A section of the loyalist Muslims who had done well out of the Revolt and survived as a major landholding interest in the North-Western Provinces also formed a small nucleus of potential leaders. It was against this background that Syed Ahmad Khan emerged as the father of Muslim modernism in India.

during the post-Mutiny period. But the Muslim religious leaders or the *ulema* looked upon western penetration as a challenge of Christianity to Islam. They 'represented the rebellious spirit of the disgruntled Muslims' and refused to surrender to 'a policy of compromise and appeasement.'²⁶ On the contrary, they started the Deoband movement in the United Provinces in 1867 for the preservation of the traditional Islamic culture and to uphold the old politics of resistance. In striking contrast, the comparatively more liberal among the Muslims who viewed the European impact as a political, economic and intellectual challenge, started the modernist movement on western lines at Aligarh and Calcutta under the leadership of Syed Ahmad Khan and Abdul Latif respectively.

A contemporary of Mawlana Muhammad Qasim Nanawtawi (1832-80), the founder of the Deoband seminary, but unlike the former, Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-98) in his early life was a *Wahhabite* in his affiliations. His comments on the *Wahhabi* leaders were first published in 1846 in his *Asar-as-Sanadid* (chapter IV) where he 'extolled the Wahabite call to *Jihad* in exaggerated terms of religious piety'.²⁷ After 1846 when the Syed passed over to the camp of the British, these crucial portions were deleted from subsequent editions of the book, and he even tried to repudiate what he had preached up to 1846. This *volte face* in the Syed's attitude was complete when he realized that unless the Muslims could be persuaded to come to terms with their Christian rulers and the new learning, they would continue to fall behind 'in the race for position among the magnates of the world'.²⁸ In his attempts to improve Anglo-Muslim relations, he deliberately underplayed the anti-British side of the *Wahhabi* movement to prove that it was primarily anti-Sikh in character. In order to achieve this end, Syed Ahmad had to distort the facts of history to some extent. But in all fairness to him, it may be pointed out that his essentially pragmatic approach led him to adopt this course as an act of policy. In order to achieve the cardinal aim of his life, the educational regeneration of his community in accordance with the western principles of liberalism and rationalism, Syed Ahmad had to reformulate the traditional Quranic teachings. This brought him into conflict with the *ulema* and all their orthodox followers in upper India. In his battle with the conservatives the Syed emerged

triumphant. His victory bore fruit in the foundation of a school at Aligarh in 1875 which prepared the ground for the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, the crowning achievement of the Grand Old Man of Aligarh. 'It is questionable whether Aligarh College and its founder would ever have been able to play the important role they did if government's attention had not been focussed especially on Muslim affairs.'²⁹ Leading officials heaped favours, personal and public, upon the Muslim effort. Although Syed Ahmad was the genius behind Aligarh 'it was government's patronage that made the College and its managers a major political force,' remarked Robinson. The conservative opponents of Syed Ahmad interpreted his movement as a British machination for lightening the bond of slavery over the Indian Muslims.

It is generally held that Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was the pioneer of the progressive changes and reforms that marked Muslim Society in the second half of the nineteenth century. But it has been pointed out in the foregoing chapter that a select little group of enlightened Muslims in Calcutta had been from an earlier period pointing out to their co-religionists the wisdom of a policy of loyalty to the British Government, and pleading for the adjustment of their classical education with modern conditions. The man who rendered yeoman's service to this cause was Nawab Abdul Latif, Khan Bahadur (1828-1893), generally regarded as the father of Muslim modernism in Bengal. A contemporary of Sir Syed, eleven years his junior to be more precise, Abdul Latif worked for the amelioration of the Muslims of Bengal in his independent capacity and even anticipated many of the measures which made Sir Syed famous in history as the father of Muslim modernism in India. 'It may be held,' wrote Dr R. C. Majumdar, 'that the Bengal Muslims took up the cause of their community before Syed Ahmad, and anticipated, in some respects, the Aligarh movement *minus* its extreme communal attitude.'³⁰ Unlike Sir Syed, Abdul Latif was fortunate in securing for his views and activities the support of Maulavi Karamat Ali, the leading religious reformer of his times.³¹ It was also remarkable that the Calcutta Madrassah, the earliest theological seminary of the Muslims of Bengal, maintained by the British Government, developed an oppositionist stance against the conser-

vative stronghold of the Muslims at Deoband.³²

I have attempted to analyse why Sir Syed, and not Abdul Latif, credited by contemporaries and posterity (a few scattered references notwithstanding) as the initiator of several significant moves for the amelioration of his co-religionists ; and under what circumstances during the period under consideration, Muslim leadership and developments remained localized. A 'scion of one of the Mughal Empire's great service families,' Syed Ahmad had a background that marked him out as an excellent representative of the Urdu-speaking élite. It was not surprising that he was always first and foremost a Muslim.³³ A 'born orator', independent of mind, he 'argued with a freedom tone and language which Natives seldom use.' Sir Syed was perhaps the first modern Muslim to take up the pen and was eminently successful in dissipating contemporary notions of Muslim complicity in the Revolt of 1857 (although the historicity of his statements and arguments could not always be proved), and in his propaganda for the necessity of Anglo-Muslim collaboration. A series of his publications like *The Causes of the Indian Revolt*, written in Urdu in 1858, and translated into English by his two European friends (Benares, 1873), *An Account of the Loyal Mahomedans of India* (Meerut, 1860), his *Review of Dr. Hunter's Indian Musalmans : are they bound in conscience to rebel against the Queen ?* (Benares, 1872) and *A Series of Essays on the Life of Mohammed and Subjects Subsidiary thereto*, published in London in 1870 (to dispel the Englishmen's *idée fixe* that the Muslims were fanatical), were notably successful in achieving their purpose. The Syed's visit to England in 1869 left a lasting impression on his mind of the superiority of the western civilization and its educational system in particular. In the business of publishing the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* and the *Tahzibul-Akhlaq* or the *Muslim Social Reformer* and in the problems of running an independent College which existed on largely voluntary subscriptions, he drew together leading Muslims from the Urdu-speaking élite. They were all members of service families, several like Syed Ahmad from the old Delhi Court, and thus they formed a nucleus of Muslim leadership which rallied under the banner of Sir Syed. This much-needed mobilization of public opinion brought him into prominence as the torch-bearer of his community as well as the man of the hour

to act as an intermediary between his community and the government. No sooner had Sir Syed turned his attention to Anglo-Muslim reconciliation, than the bureaucracy found extra reasons for singling him out and heaping upon him the highest honours. 'Government's patronage of Syed Ahmed and his family as representatives of UP and Indian Muslim interests was no less conspicuous.' In Francis Robinson's opinion, Syed Ahmed would never have acquired the position and reputation that enabled him to found and lead all-India organizations, without the active patronage of the government. 'Thus, through government policy, Syed Ahmed, a man from the West UP, where the memory of Muslim power was the strongest, a man from the old Mughal Court with little in common with either the great Muslim peasant populations of Bengal and the Punjab or with the Muslim artisan masses of the UP towns, a man whose religious views were so unorthodox that the majority of his co-religionists branded him an infidel, was raised up as the advocate of his community. His views were accepted by Government as Muslim views, and because they were accepted, they found currency among other Muslims who might otherwise have thought differently.'²⁴

Abdul Latif was also one such personality, but lacking a combination of so many favourable factors. The élite Muslim society in Calcutta was strictly limited, and the vast multitude of the Muslims in the eastern districts of Bengal represented the peasantry and the backyards of Islam. Latif was the spokesman of the Bengali Muslims' interests and problems and remained throughout his career, despite his many remarkable achievements, the Muslim leader of the Lower provinces. Sir Syed emerged as the unrivalled champion of the Muslim interests of this sub-continent, though the sphere of his operations remained confined to the United Provinces for the better part of his life and career.

The crux of this situation lay in the various divisions which worked together to rend as under the Muslims of the different parts in India and endowed them with problems and interests peculiar to their own regions. 'It was true that in Bengal, a generally forward region in terms of education and economic change, the Muslims were generally backward. But in upper India, a generally backward region in terms of education and

economic change, they were if anything, generally forward.³⁵ There were great differences between the position of Muslims in one part of India and another. As a result they were not always competing with the Hindus, but even with their co-religionists in another region. 'Not only might Muslim be set against Hindu, but Muslim might be set against Muslim, Hindu against Hindu.'³⁶ The above fact was often overlooked, whether deliberately or by accident it is difficult to determine. W. W. Hunter in his celebrated work *The Indian Musalmans*, appeared to write about the Muslims of India while as per his own confession, his knowledge qualified him to talk on behalf of the Muslims of the Lower provinces only. During this time the Viceroy, Lord Mayo, having drawn his conclusions from Bengal, set out to formulate a policy for the Muslims in general scattered all over the subcontinent. One of the leading organizations of the Muslims of a later date (National Mahomedan Association) in its Memorial of 1882 addressed to the Government had the Muslims of Bengal particularly in mind, although by *suggestio falsi*, it was the Muslims of India of whom they appeared to be speaking. It was perhaps not surprising under these circumstances that though Sir Syed devoted his life's energies to the welfare of the upper and middle strata of Muslim society, yet he was unanimously acclaimed as the leader of the Indian Muslims. His Aligarh College benefited only the Muslims of the Urdu-speaking élite and his life's mission was to maintain their influence in the Indian society. Sir Syed never understood the Bengali Muslim problem in its proper perspective, and one searches in vain for an attempt at solution in his rather long and eventful career.

Like his more illustrious contemporary, Abdul Latif also operated within a narrow social base and his pioneering services to the cause of Muslim education in Bengal had only the *ashraf* Muslims in view. It may well serve at this point to make a brief survey of the transition from the traditional Islamic learning imparted in the Calcutta Madrassah to an urge in the Muslim mind towards the acquisition of knowledge in western science and literature through the medium of the English language. Public instruction for the Muslims in Bengal had begun with the establishment of an institution which followed the traditional system of Islamic learning. The outlook and other

attending circumstances of the time could not have indicated any other course. It was at the instance of a considerable number of 'Mussalmans of credit and learning', whose object was to persuade a highly qualified stranger named Majeeduddin to remain in the Presidency for the instruction of young students in Muhammadan law and such other sciences taught in the Muhammadan schools, that the Calcutta Madrassah was founded in October 1780 by Warren Hastings at his own expense. It was the first educational institution for the instruction of Muslim boys under British patronage and before long it came 'to be looked upon by all orders of Muhammadans as peculiarly their own national place of education'.³⁷ The purpose of Hastings was to educate respectable Muslims to assist in the administration of justice, 'as also enabling that class, who in education and knowledge of business were even then being rapidly distanced by Hindus to compete on equal terms with the latter'.³⁸ The above statement made jointly by some Englishmen and a leader of the Muhammadan community was highly significant as pointing out that long before the introduction of English education in Bengal, when Persian was still the *lingua franca* and Islamic jurisprudence the law of the land, there were unmistakable signs of the Hindus outstripping the Muslims in the latter's own field of classical training. Hence the oft-repeated view that Hindu progress and Muslim retrogression in education were the results of the introduction of English education needs to be reconsidered. The question remains to be examined whether even if English education had not been introduced, the Hindus by dint of their numerical preponderance in educational institutions and with an essentially pragmatic approach to acquire learning for the sake of securing service, would not have ultimately outdistanced the Muslims. Though avowedly an institution for Arabic and Persian learning, the Madrassah came to be closely associated with the general education of the Muslim community. The Government on its part made experiments in the English education of Muslims in this institution. For about a century, the progress of Muslim education in this Presidency was thus bound up with the history of this institution. Unfortunately for the Muslims of Bengal, the Calcutta Madrassah maintained by government funds and controlled by government officials functioned under bureaucratic influence. This

served in no small measure to retard Muslim educational progress in Bengal along independent lines ; whereas in the beginning of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Muslim students of upper India had their own place of education at Aligarh where they could study, 'without injuring their souls'.

The majority of the students of the Calcutta Madrassah were and always have been residents of Eastern Bengal (chiefly, Chittagong, Noakhali and Sylhet), which sent no less than 80 per cent of the total number of students. There were many respectable though poor Muhammadan families in these parts of Bengal with a great love for Arabic learning. In fact the Arabic department of the Calcutta Madrassah was maintained down to a very late period, precisely for the benefit of far-off Eastern Bengal.³⁹ This great predilection for Arabic was manifested in a remarkable degree in the Madrassah even under conditions, when it had outlived its practical utility. As late as 1869 the Muhammadans of Eastern Bengal were not so favourably disposed to English education as those of other parts of Bengal.⁴⁰ But at about the same time only a few students joined the Calcutta Madrassah from the neighbourhood of the metropolis itself, the reason apparently being that the Muhammadans in Calcutta and in the districts adjacent thereto, preferred English education to that obtainable in the Arabic Department. This worldly class among the students of the Calcutta Madrassah were mostly sons of petty *zamindars*, *talukdars*, *munsifs*, *Kazees*, merchants and *murshis*. Nearly all belonged to decayed and impoverished families and on completion of their education hoped to work for their livelihood, their ambition being to obtain services under the Government. They were not keen on receiving Arabic education, but were content with an adequate knowledge of Persian which would give them the passport to high society. Moreover the Madrassah had lost all its former grandeur and glory with the abolition of the posts of *Kazees* and law officers (Act xi of 1864). The respectable Muslims began to keep themselves away from the Madrassah in the same proportion as they formerly considered it their glory to get admitted into it. For these reasons the condition of the Muhammadans became increasingly miserable. In his Minute of 18 May 1853, published in the *Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal*, No. xiv, the late

Hon'ble John Russell Colvin, while suggesting the introduction of a special English education at the Calcutta Madrassah, pointed out that the Muhammadans were 'becoming quite alive in the districts under the Bengal Government to the value of English as a means of advancement in all departments of business'.⁴¹ 'It is no longer open to debate whether respectable Muhammadans are willing to have their children imbued with the principles of a sound healthy English education. The wide gulf of time during which it remained doubtful has been passed over,' remarked the author of an article in the August number of the *Calcutta Review*.⁴² In view of this growing desire for sound English education among the 'higher and more respectable' Muslims, 'it became increasingly clear that what held them back from the new learning was poverty rather than religious prejudice'. Blochmann argued that Muslims 'whenever they can afford it, do send their children to school', explaining the 'backwardness of the Bengali Muhammadans....[by] the small number of such Muhammadans families as can afford to send their children to our schools'.⁴³ The fact that the Muslims of Eastern Bengal and those from the neighbourhood of Calcutta studying at the same Madrassah, were in favour of diametrically opposed types of education presented an anomalous state of affairs to the educational reformers of the day, and necessitated piecemeal reforms rather than sweeping changes. Moreover the fact that Bengali, and not Urdu or Persian was the natural vernacular of the vast majority of the Bengali Muslims who belonged to the cultivating classes, posed problems which were peculiar to the Muslims of that province alone. Prejudice, poverty and language proved to be the three most important stumbling-blocks on which the highly debatable subject of Muslim education in Bengal floundered again and again.

The next important problem was the attitude and the policy of the British Government towards Muslim education in general. In the first official communication of the authorities in England on state responsibility for the education of the Indians (Educational Despatch issued by the Court of Directors on 3 June 1814), 'the interest of the Muslim community did not receive the consideration it deserved. No mention was made in the Despatch of Arabic and Persian learning, though the

need for its encouragement had been already and quite forcefully pointed out by Minto only two years ago'.⁴⁴ The inadequacy of funds led the government to formulate a policy of educating only the upper classes on the basis of the 'downward filtration theory'. Education thus came to be monopolized by the rising commercial classes of Calcutta, composed of Hindus. It failed to 'filter' down to the 'toiling masses' who in Bengal happened to be composed mainly of the Muslims. The earliest attempt to establish an English class in the Calcutta Madrassah made in 1826, under the directions of the Governor General ended in a complete failure. Between 1826 and 1851, during which it was kept up, the English department produced only two junior scholars, Abdul Latif and Waheedon Nubee at a total cost of Rs 103,794.⁴⁵ These 'attempts at anglicising the superstructure of the Mahomedan mind over the basis of a half-formed Arabic Scholarship' having failed, the Calcutta Madrassah instead of being incorporated in all its branches with the University system, with such modifications as might have been needed for the purpose, was allowed to stand in its old form amidst changed circumstances and there were repeated references to its failure.⁴⁶ The 'liberal and generous treatment of the Hindu College, a private institution, by the government', regretted A. R. Mallick, 'stands in sad contrast to the attitude of indifference and neglect hitherto shown by them to the Calcutta Madrassah, a government institution'. In fact, the failure of the English class of the Madrassah was ascribed, by the Secretary of the Education Council, in 1852, to 'the bad quality of the instruction given' rather than 'to the general indisposition of the Mahomedans to the study'.⁴⁷

While the Muslims were stimulated by an 'artificial inducement to cultivate Arabic literature', and chronic poverty militated against their joining the Government schools and colleges, the system and course of studies offered them was defective and their only institution was 'badly managed and inefficiently run'. To make matters worse, attempts made by the rulers to introduce reforms in the Madrassah were invariably thwarted from within. In August 1821, the system of public examination was for the first time introduced in the Madrassah in the teeth of bitter opposition from the pupils as well as the preceptors.⁴⁸ Dr Aloys Sprenger, who was appointed Principal of the Calcutta

Madrassah and visitor and Director of the Hooghly Madrassahs, incurred the displeasure of the students in introducing certain reforms.⁴⁰ As a result, growing indiscipline and deteriorating standards continued to pose a serious problem to the Government. At length, the special difficulties and obstacles which stood in the way of the Muslims became the subject of frequent discussion by the Government of India. The Court of Directors in their Education Despatch of 1854 noted with pleasure that the Council of Education of Bengal had Muslim education under consideration. As a result of the reforms introduced in the Madrassah to make it 'worthy of the confidence of Mussulman gentlemen', and the opening of the Collingah Branch School in a predominantly Muslim area, the Muslim community specially of Calcutta, took 'a surer road to progress in education'. Lack of initiative on the part of the Muslims themselves and a faltering policy adopted by an extremely cautious Government, determined not to take steps likely to arouse antagonism, failed to give the much needed start to the Muslims of Bengal. As the reformers happened to be the Christian rulers of the country, every single act of theirs was looked upon with overt and covert suspicion as measures undertaken with the ulterior motive of conversion. But in the second half of the nineteenth century, the emergence of Abdul Latif as the leader of his community in Calcutta marked a significant turning point for more reasons than one. In the first place, Latif being one from within the Muslim community itself, was better qualified and more susceptible to the sensitiveness of his co-religionists. Secondly, as a distinguished scholar of the English class of the Madrassah, he shone as a brilliant example before his co-religionists as one who did not sacrifice his traditionalism to the last. He was the need of the hour. The better and enlightened section of the Muslims responded to his behests, while the Government patronized him with prize posts to show to the Muslim community the resultant benefits of loyal service. It was not merely for his sacrifices, services or loyalty towards the Government during the Mutiny of 1857 that Abdul Latif like many of his contemporaries won honours and titles. His steady rise under the Government to the 'acme of Sub-executive ambition' was well-earned by his merit and able services for a period close

upon thirty years.

It was but natural for Abdul Latif (whose father had served as a pleader in the Sadar Dewani Adalat of Calcutta for twenty-eight years) to choose Calcutta as the starting point of his future career. From the post of Professor in the Anglo-Arabic department of the Calcutta Madrassah, Abdul Latif gradually rose to be the leader of his community. It was in 1849 that Sir Herbert Maddock, the Deputy Governor of Bengal, made the Maulavi a Deputy Magistrate at Alipur, the headquarters of the metropolitan district of the 24-Parganas. This was a great favour. It enabled him to remain in Calcutta and enjoy society. Though his post was not necessarily a prize post, he had his headquarters in a 'prize locality' close to a great capital and now included within its municipal limits. Abdul Latif 'easily maintained himself as a fixture there, to the envy and indignation of his brother Deputies and the wonder of the world in general'.⁵⁰ His rise in the service was rapid, and within three years, in April 1852, he was invested with the full powers of a Magistrate. In January 1853, Latif was promoted by Lord Dalhousie to a higher grade and placed in charge of the newly formed subdivision of *Kalaroa* (24-Parganas, later called the subdivision of Satkhira, now in Khulna). A year later, in June 1854, his reputation recommended him for the notorious subdivision of Jahanabad in the District of Hooghly—'a -despair of the Bengal Government'—where he served for five years. On his departure, he was presented with a beautifully expressed address by the Hindu *zamindars* and leading men of the locality—'the first of such documents which was creditable to both sides'. For the following eight years (June 1859-1867) Abdul Latif served at the District Headquarters of the 24-Parganas (Alipore) till he was appointed in 1867 the first Magistrate to the newly created Suburban Police Court at Alipore, an office which he held for ten years. The best commentary on his career as a police magistrate was the fact that the Europeans brought up before him invariably waived their right to be tried by a magistrate of their own nationality.

Stepping from grade to grade, Abdul Latif, in January 1862, reached the original First Grade of Deputies carrying a pay of Rs 700 per month. 'That was the acme of Sub-

Executive ambition'. It was not till 1867 that a post carrying a salary of Rs 800 a month was specially sanctioned for the service and he was appointed to it. In January 1862, during the administration of the late Lord Canning, when Legislative Councils were first created in the several Presidencies of India (by the Indian Councils Act of 1861), Sir J. P. Grant, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, nominated Abdul Latif to the Bengal Legislative Council. The latter was the first Muhammadan ever appointed, and at that time, the only one in any of the Legislatures, Local or Imperial. In 1870, he was selected for the second time for this honourable position by Sir William Grey, during the Viceroyalty of Lord Mayo; and for a third time in 1872 when Lord Northbrook was the Governor-General. On this occasion Sir George Campbell, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, addressing the Maulavi wrote, 'I don't think that Mahomedan community could be better represented in the Legislative Council than by yourself.'⁵¹ It was during his third term that Abdul Latif carried through the Council a Bill for the Voluntary Registration of Muhammadan marriages and divorces. By reviving the Offices of the Kazis in the shape of Registrars of Muhammadan marriages and divorces, Latif felt that a crying evil affecting the Muhammadan community was remedied, and it also afforded a means of livelihood altogether independent of the Government, to those officers whose posts under the Government had been abolished.

On 1 October 1877, Abdul Latif was appointed to the Suburban Police Court at Sealdah, and continued in this charge till 31 December 1884, on which date he retired from the service of the Government. For a period of close upon thirty years, Latif occupied 'a position of some prominence at Alipore, Sealdah, and Calcutta, under the direct eye of the heads of Local Administration'. In addition to his regular posts Abdul Latif also held a number of additional appointments. From 1860 to 1885 he was a Member of the Board of Examiners for the Civil and Military Services. In 1863 when the Municipal Corporation was first created for the Town of Calcutta, Abdul Latif was placed in this civic body where he remained till its dissolution in 1876. In the same year, for his services in the cause of education, Latif was appointed

a Fellow of the Calcutta University by Lord Elgin. In 1864 when a Municipality was first created for the suburbs of Calcutta, he was appointed a Commissioner, a position which he held until the old regime gave way to the elective principle in the beginning of 1885. In 1876, Abdul Latif was appointed one of the Government nominees to the Municipal Board when the office of Municipal Commissioner was established under a mixed system of election and nomination. One of the best epitaphs accorded to the Nawab, and that which beautifully summed up his public career, appeared in the columns of the *Reis and Rayyet* of 15 July 1893. 'For a whole generation he was the sole Mahomedan at most public gatherings.... That was no public meeting which Abdool Luteef did not attend: that was Non-Committee of which Abdool Luteef was not one: that was no social, educational, or learned institution of which Abdool Luteef was no member. He was nobody in Calcutta whom Abdool Luteef did not know.... He was the only Bengali who was best and most widely known out of Bengal.'⁵²

At a time when the English classes in the Madrassah presented the spectacle of empty benches facing the solitary teacher, a few intelligent boys like the late Syed brothers, Azamooddeen Hassan and Zainuddin Hossein (in their day, ornaments of the service), Waheedon Nubee and Abdul Latif, broke through the trammels of prejudice and turned a new leaf in the annals of the College. These young scholars 'were lionised' at the close of their academic career 'for their proficiency in English in special'. They became *ipso facto* members of society and had the entrée to the best houses. The experiment was watched with great interest by the Government and philanthropic Europeans. The highest official delighted to be their patrons.⁵³

To Abdul Latif belongs the unique honour of being the pioneer of English education among the Muslims of Bengal. At a public meeting held on 10 January 1868, Abdul Latif made a vigorous plea for the English education of Muhammedan boys and suggested the transformation of the Anglo-Persian Department of the Calcutta Madrassah to the status of a College. 'The Muslim leaders in Bengal thus took a lead in this matter even before Sir Syed Ahmad thought of the Aligarh

College.⁵⁴ Unfortunately, the proposal of Abdul Latif was not carried into effect. The foundation of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was the highest endeavour of his life. It was all the more creditable to the Grand Old Man as it was undertaken and accomplished in the evening of his life, after his retirement from Government service. 'But before Sir Syed Ahmad was on the field, Abdool Luteef was there, exhorting, supplicating, entreating, earnestly appealing to his co-religionists to give their sons an English education, if they wanted to hold their own, in competition with the Hindus.'⁵⁵

At a time when the Muslim gentry and religious authorities in Bengal had firmly set their faces against English influence, and when many of them were infected with a fanatical hatred for the British power, Abdul Latif had the courage to stand forth as the champion of Western education. During 1852-53 the question of educating the Muhammadan youths in the English language and literature attracted the attention of the Council of Education. Finding the authorities timid and his countrymen unwilling even to listen to him, he hit upon the simple device of advertising a prize of Rs 100 only for the best essay in Persian 'On the advantages of an English Education to Muhammadan students'. In this connection it may be borne in mind that it was only after his return from England in 1870 that Sir Syed Ahmad formed some of the more enlightened of the Muhammadan community into 'A Committee for the better diffusion and advancement of learning among the Muhammadans of India'. In order to investigate the causes which prevented the Muhammadan community from availing themselves of the study of Western arts and sciences, the Committee offered three prizes for the three best essays on the subject. This very idea was anticipated in Bengal at least seventeen years earlier, if not more. It may not be an improbable conjecture on the basis of their occasional collaboration, that perhaps Sir Syed was to some extent influenced in this respect by Abdul Latif.

Abdul Latif wrote in his autobiography that his chief object in offering the prize was to invite to the subject the attention of those of the Muhammadan community throughout the country, who had not even give a thought to the question

of imparting an English education to their children. The object aimed at was attained. Elaborate essays were received from the Punjab, Oudh, the North-Western Provinces, Bengal, Bihar and even Bombay. Many argued against and even denounced the giver of the prize as 'an enemy and revolutionizer of Islam'. A Committee of four of the most learned and influential members of the Muhammadan community (Kazi Fuzloor Ruhman, Khan Bahadur Kazi-ul-Kuzul, Kazi Abdool Baree, Kazi of Calcutta, Prince Mahomed Busheeroodeen of the Mysore Family and Syud Shah Golfut Hosain, a well-known scholar and author) was appointed to examine the essays. Frederick Halliday, the first Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal and an oriental scholar of repute, presided. The prize was awarded to a native of Bombay in 1856.⁵⁶ When the tempest subsided it left behind a new Muhammadan party in Bengal. This new party it was the business of Abdul Latif's life to develop into an effective power among his countrymen.⁵⁷

About the same time Abdul Latif helped the authorities in the establishment of the Anglo-Persian Department of the Calcutta Madrassah. Shortly after, his attention was devoted to giving the Muhammadans a higher standard of education than the Anglo-Persian Department could afford to impart. This led to the creation of the Presidency College chiefly with a view to providing an institution for imparting a higher standard of English education to the Muhammadan community of Calcutta. Before the Presidency College was created the Hindu and the Christian communities of Calcutta had their own Colleges for higher English education. The difficulties under which the Muhammadan community of Calcutta laboured for the want of such an institution were perceived by Abdul Latif and he brought it to the attention of the educational authorities. The Hindu College established from funds advanced by Hindu gentlemen could not be open to Muslim students. So the Government ultimately decided to found the Presidency College which would be open to students of all classes and creeds. 'Since the creation of the Presidency College, it was exceedingly gratifying to him (Abdul Latif) and to his other co-religionists to find that the Muhammadan Community had not been backward in availing themselves of

the advantages which a beneficent Government had placed before them.⁵⁸

The above facts prove that Western education in Bengal, consciously or unconsciously, proceeded along denominational lines. While the Hindu College could not be opened to the Muslim students for reasons mentioned above, it was a matter of equal displeasure to the Muslims that the Haji Mohammad Mohsin College at Hooghly founded from the Trust funds endowed by a beneficent Muhammadan gentleman was being monopolized by the Hindus. When the Council of Education and the Hindu College Council passed an order rescinding the rule which prohibited the entrance of other than Hindu students, the *Harkaru* in its issue of 25 February 1853 remarked that although the measure was opposed to the spirit in which the College was originally established, nevertheless it was 'decidedly a move in the right direction'.⁵⁹ But the order produced a furore in the conservative sections of the Hindu society, reflected in the columns of the *Sanibad Prabhakar* in particular. In its editorial column dated 23 November 1853, the newspaper resented the admission of 'Yavanas' in educational institutions supported by and meant for the Hindus exclusively. It was further stated that the establishment of the 'Hindu Metropolitan College' in Calcutta was the result of a reaction against the above-mentioned orders.⁶⁰ The Muslims of Bengal on the other hand remained sullenly resentful of the Mohsinia Trust funds being expended on a system of education that favoured the Hindus. Principal W. N. Lees of the Calcutta Madrassah wrote in his report of October 1864, that this was regarded by the Muslims as 'a flagrant breach of trust' and that they 'did not hesitate in their social assemblies to designate this act as one of robbery'.⁶¹ The efforts undertaken by Abdul Latif to remedy this defect gave a great impetus to the Muslims of Bengal to pursue their studies in institutes of higher education. Moreover at a time when economic insolvency stood in the way of the Bengali Muslims' prosecution of higher studies, reference was made in certain quarters to the measures adopted for the encouragement of English education among the Hindus in the Hooghly district. For several years after the establishment of the Mohsin College 'not only were no fees demanded from

Hindu boys who applied for admission, but even books and slates were furnished to them at the cost of the college. And all this was done at a time when the Hindu College of Calcutta, founded and chiefly supported by the Hindus themselves, was in a flourishing condition'.⁶² The above is illustrative of the fact that the situational requirements for separate institutes of education was only the first step in a series of developments which gradually culminated in the demand for a separate teaching staff and inspecting agency and for preferential financial treatment in the shape of special scholarships and stipends. Public discussions as to the system of education that would suit the Muslims added strength to these separatist tendencies that became manifest, once the disparate development of the two communities became evident.

Of all his activities none brought out the talents of Abdul Latif into such prominent relief as the establishment of the Mahomedan Literary Society in April 1863 with the encouragement and co-operation of the then Viceroy, Lord Elgin. Among the Muslims of Bengal, such societies were needed for even the initial object of popularizing among them Government educational institutions. In course of an address presented to Lord Northbrook on 9 May 1872, on behalf of the Mahomedan Literary Society,⁶³ Abdul Latif said that being fully aware of his co-religionists' 'inactivity, their pride, their unworthy and unjustifiable contempt of foreign culture', a 'special agency was needed to rouse them from their torpor', to imbue them with a desire to interest themselves in Western learning and progress, and to give them an opportunity for the cultivation of social and intellectual intercourse with the best representatives of the English and the Hindu societies.

At the very outset, Latif felt that even his efforts would be wasted if spent on inducing the foremost members of his community to come forward to join an association having politics as its admitted sphere of action. His own position too as a Government servant prevented him from openly criticizing in a hostile or captious spirit any of the legislative or executive measures of that Government. A literary society, on the contrary, was the most inoffensive of all associations. A correct appreciation of what was needed in view of the time, place and circumstances, made the Nawab dub the

association he founded as the Mahomedan Literary Society. It was soon recognized by the Government. Amid the discouragement which they faced from the vast conservative force of their community in the initial stages, the projectors and active members of the Society were cheered in their labours by the unvarying support and encouragement of the heads of the Government. Before long, it was able to count among its members many of the leading Muhammadan nobility and gentry in the principal cities of the Empire. The intelligence, wealth and position of many of its members gave it a weight that could not belong to it under the circumstances.

By its meetings, lectures and annual conversaziones held at the Town Hall of Calcutta, the Society gave remarkable impetus to the cause of Muhammadan advancement, besides constituting a consultative body for successive Administrations in regard to education, legislation and other cognate subjects bearing upon the well-being of the Muslim society. Long before the study of scientific subjects was popularized in Bengal, the interesting annual conversaziones that the Mahomedan Literary Society organized resulted in a very wholesome *rapprochement* in social relations between the different communities. Papers written and read in the purest Persian and Urdu by competent persons roused an interest and curiosity in scientific studies that paved the way for substantial work in that direction. With regard to these conversaziones, Sir Ashley Eden in his reply to an address presented to him on 2 May 1877, by the Mahomedan Literary Society said: 'I may remark in passing that this conversazione due to my initiation, was the *first* of its kind, as a social gathering.'⁶⁴ The Nawab's pioneering services in this direction have been somewhat minimized by the biographer of Sri Syed. In the first meeting of the Translation Society founded at Ghazipur by Sri Syed on 9 January 1864 (which was later shifted to Aligarh and came to be known as the Scientific Society), Graham observed: 'For the first time in the annals of Hindustan has a Muhammadan gentleman, alone and unaided, thought over and commenced a Society in order to bring the knowledge and literature of the nations of the Western world within reach of the immense masses of the people.'⁶⁵ It may be interesting to recall here that three months prior to the

foundation of the Translation Society in January 1864, Sir Syed at the invitation of Abdul Latif had gone all the way to deliver a speech before the Mahomedan Literary Society at Calcutta on the obligation of the Muslims to learn English. The credit given to Sir Syed by Graham is perhaps more legitimately due to Latif whose Mahomedan Literary Society was founded nearly a year before Syed Ahmad's Translation Society, to enable the Muslim community to imbibe a sound and useful knowledge of the Western nations. This may also serve to dispel the misconception of Garoin de Tassy who wrote in his book *La Langue et la Litterature de 1850 a 1869*, that the foundation of the Mahomedan Literary Society followed Sir Syed's address delivered at Calcutta.⁶⁶ However, Sir Syed's Scientific Society made a unique contribution by bringing out a large number of translations.

The best official acknowledgement of the services rendered by the Mahomedan Literary Society came in the form of a letter addressed on behalf of the Lieutenant-Governor to Abdul Latif where it was stated that the latter had 'successfully led the Muhammadans, not only of Bengal but of India generally, to look beyond the narrow bounds of their own system...'⁶⁷ and acquire the best that is embodied in the English language. Moreover, by his active and reasonable interposition on many occasions, he had led the Muslims to form a just conception of the policy and intentions of the Government and to express their opinions freely not only on questions of literary and scientific interest, but also on those affecting their own social and political condition and the general welfare of the country. The above view was shared in other quarters. The *Times* of London in its issue of 4 September 1893, examining the achievements of this thirty-madan Community in Bengal now accepts, as a matter of course, the views which its leaders refused even to discuss with the young reformer forty years ago'.⁶⁸ Down to the close of the nineteenth century, the importance which the Government attached to the work done and views expressed by the Mahomedan Literary Society may be gathered from the fact that Lord George Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India, characterized the Society on 18 February 1898, as 'represent-

ing Muhammadan feeling in its best form both in Calcutta and throughout India'.⁶⁹

'To two complete generations of his countrymen, and to more than two generations of British officials, the Nawab Bahadur Abdul Luteef formed the link between the present and the past.'⁷⁰ The British Government gave him what it had to give in the shape of titles and honours, but it is as a Muhammadan who led forth his countrymen into new fields of achievement and new realms of knowledge, without losing his own orthodoxy, that Abdul Latif has won his place in Indian history.⁷¹ Contemporary newspapers were replete with comments testifying to the Nawab's services for his community. The *Indian Mirror* of 2 June 1880, stated that whatever movement was inaugurated in Calcutta for the welfare of the Muslims, Abdul Latif 'has either been the originator or the chief promoter of it'.⁷² Indeed, the Muhammadan society and interest of the day was of his making, remarked Sambhu Charan Mukherjee in his *Reis and Rayyat* of 15 July 1893.⁷³ A jealous watcher of the welfare of the community to which he belonged, Abdul Latif was equally a part and parcel of the Hindu society. The *Hindu Patriot* of 7 June 1880, wrote that the name of the 'Maulvi Saheb' was a household word in many a Hindu family.⁷⁴ To Abdul Latif the Bengali Muslims owed a debt of gratitude, if not greater, as the Muslims of Upper India did to Sir Syed Ahmad who devoted himself to similar work and at about the same time in the United Provinces. One was the other's worthy co-adjutor and colleague. Each inspired the other. The task which both of them took in hand could only be accomplished by slow degrees. It must be the work of time to remove the prejudice of ages.

'The Nawab never lacked detractors covert and avowed.' Latif's loyalty to the Government was looked upon by many as undue subservience to please the British. For his efforts to promote English education among his co-religionists he was denounced 'as an enemy and revolutionizer of Islam'. And his good offices to bring about a reconciliation between the Muslims and the Hindus, when their passions ran high on mistaken religious grounds, were viewed with suspicion by both the communities. Dealing with a backward community

the task of Abdul Latif was not always an easy one. The opposition which he met with in the beginning from the ignorant and the ill-disposed was well-known to the high officers of the Government. As a result of the prevailing excitement among the ignorant classes of Muslims owing to the conduct and movement of the *Wahhabis*, Abdul Latif made it a point to plead for the removal of the spirit of *jihād* against the British rulers, though, however, it devolved upon Sir Syed to set loyalism to the British rule as the goal of Muslim politics. Unlike Sir Syed, Abdul Latif was fortunate in receiving support from one of the most eminent and influential religious reformers of his day—Maulavi Karamat Ali of Jaunpur. The latter stood for a *modus vivendi* between the radicalism of the *Faraizis* and the *Wahhabis* on the one hand and the un-Islamic *bida'at* (innovations) on the other. On 23 November 1870, at a meeting of the Mahomedan Literary Society, Karamat Ali delivered a very significant address on the subject 'The Duty of Muhammadans in British India towards the Ruling Power'. The Maulavi quoted from classic works of Muslim Jurisprudence to show that British India was *Dar-ul-Islam* and that therefore it was unlawful and irreligious to preach *jihād*. This was in accordance with the views, sentiments, and feelings of the leaders of the Muhammadan community, and was supported by the opinions of the leading Muftis of Mecca. Five thousand copies of the Proceedings of the meeting were widely circulated throughout India, contributing not a little to allay agitation amongst the more ignorant and misinformed Muslims.

However, this new-born feeling of loyalty was given a strong jolt by the upsurge of public opinion in Britain against Turkey over the Bulgarian Massacres of 1876. Apprehensive lest his Muslim fellow-countrymen might, 'in the fervour of their feelings forget their position as loyal subjects of a Neutral Power', Abdul Latif solicited the permission of the Lieutenant-Governor to hold a meeting. On 7 October 1876, a mammoth meeting of the Muslims of Calcutta was held at the Town Hall under the Chairmanship of Abdul Latif. On the one hand, there was a fair representation of the Muhammadan Princes, Nawabs, Moghul merchants, successors and representatives of the old houses including the famous wealthy class known

as 'Nakhodas', so closely connected with shipping and commercial interests. On the other hand, the uncovenanted service in its Muhammadan element was strongly represented in this gathering. There were pleaders, maulavis, moonshis and madrasah students. But the bulk of the crowd consisted of poor Muslims—small shopkeepers and serving men. Resolutions were passed to raise funds in aid of the Turkish wounded and to submit a memorial to the Queen for the extension of Her help to the Sultan of Turkey. The movement thus initiated by Abdul Latif in Calcutta was followed up by the Muslims in other parts of India. The fact that such a well-represented meeting could be organized on an extra-Indian but highly sensitive issue, at which the Muslims of Bengal could give vent to their sentiments in a proper and constitutional manner, goes far to disprove the exaggerated jargon of Muslim apathy and indifference. The movement so well inaugurated at Calcutta gave general and unqualified satisfaction to the whole of the Muhammadan community throughout India, and allayed much disquietude at the time.

One of the most important aspects of British Indian history during the post-Mutiny period was the bureaucratic encouragement to the growth of political groups or parties on the basis of religious community. Fear of the Muslims as the greatest threat not only to British rule in India, but to the British Empire was a potent force in encouraging this trend. It became the favourite cry of the British Government therefore to refer to the differences that existed in India with regard to races, languages, religions and customs. When the Indian Councils Bill of 1861 was discussed in the House of Commons, Sir Charles Wood remarked, 'to talk of native representation is to talk of that which is simply and utterly impossible.'⁷⁵ In this strain the British Government went on repeating the difficulties, and the Indians were drugged into the belief that various interests were there and that the representation of various interests was a necessity in any scheme of representative government.⁷⁶ This new line of thinking fitted in well with the position of the Muslims who were already alienated from the mainstream of post-Mutiny political life. It was on a ready-manured soil that the Muslim leaders led their co-religionists since 1857 directly to struggle for the

recognition of their separate identity. The *divide et impera* policy of the British bureaucracy created an environment in which the self-awareness of the Muslims gained in maturity.

In the decades following the Revolt of 1857, leadership in the Muslim society in the most general terms came to be constituted of the 'Muslim westernizing bourgeoisie'. It had been gradually building up its distinctive position, social, economic and intellectual. In a growingly communalist situation, it was sharply marked off from the rest of the Indian bourgeoisie 'by being Muslim, by being a minority, according to its own claim less advanced and severely disadvantaged'.⁷⁷ Neither was it in a position to give correct leadership to the lower classes and other non-westernizers who most vividly preserved and warmly cherished the inherited ideals of Islamic tradition. The Muslim leadership in Bengal, extremely conscious of their extra-Bengali descent and heritage, of the languages (Urdu and Persian) that they spoke at home and in society, presented a socio-cultural group completely alienated from the bulk of the Bengali Muslims who were part and parcel of the soil of Bengal and whose mother tongue was Bengali. The economic weakness of the generality of the Bengali Muslims and their subordination to the rich and influential Urdu-speaking élite also hindered the possibility of any co-operation between the former and the Bengali Hindus.⁷⁸ In course of time this led to the evolution of a separatist political movement.

The two protagonists of Muslim modernism, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Nawab Abdul Latif, accommodated themselves to the ruling strangers whom they had elected to serve, and in whose hands lay all their hopes of advancement and the prosperity of their community. Consequently, politically and culturally, the movement that began in Calcutta and Aligarh was pro-British. It preached the thesis that the British Raj should not be ignored, and that the Muslims should try to get the best advantages from the British rule. The interest which the Government took in these developments was amply evident in the titles and honours that were conferred on its proteges. In the beginning of the seventies, Lord Mayo's policy of 'counterpoise' became the active expression of the new tide of British policy. The Viceroy acknowledged the need of

imparting Western education to the Muslims. These historical forces moulded and influenced Sir Syed and Abdul Latif. They could succeed only because the conditions prevailing in the post-Mutiny period were favourable to Muslim co-operation with the British Raj.

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Separatism in Education And Employment

The rapid expansion of English education in the second half of the nineteenth century brought into bolder relief a fact which had been noticed even earlier, viz., that those classes, communities and regions which took advantage of English education were gaining at the expense of others which failed to do so. This was particularly marked in the field of public employment where official policy favoured the English-educated. In a minute recorded on 24 April 1857, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal remarked : 'We could hardly do a more unpopular thing than confine all public employment to a small section of Bengalees, which is what there may be some risk of, if scholastic acquirements be too soon or too severely insisted upon ...'.¹ Those who began to lag behind in the race of life became not only resentful of those forging ahead, but also of the Government which allowed this to happen. The relative backwardness of the Muslims of Bengal in the field of English education and the consequent decline in their share of public employment posed a serious problem to their leaders as well as to the Government. In December 1862, the number of Hindus and Muslims who passed the Entrance examination were 354 and 15 respectively; and there were 33 Hindus to 3 Muslim graduates.² It may be worthy of remark however that the candidate who obtained the highest marks was a Muslim, and was later appointed a Deputy Magistrate.³ During the period 1862 to 1867 there were 2,237 Hindus who passed the Entrance examination to 66 Muslims; 524 Hindus who passed the First Arts examination to 14 Muslims; 159 Hindu graduates compared to 6 Muslim graduates; and while 57 Hindus competed success-

fully in the Master of Arts examination, not a single Muslim candidate qualified for the same.⁴ Although the 'Despatch of 1854' suggested that the Muhammadan *madrassahs* were worthy of being affiliated to the Universities, the Calcutta Madrassah was left out of the pale of the Calcutta University, and consequently the Muslims kept aloof from this institution. Had the Madrassah been so included 'the whole subsequent history of the education of the Muslims of Bengal might have been very different.'⁵

The loss of political power to the British, the much publicized economic insolvency of the Muslims, a fanatical attachment to their own religion and culture and their neglect by the Government, were the various theories advanced with some element of truth in each, to explain the phenomenon of Muslim backwardness particularly in Bengal. But perhaps the most vital explanation of Bengali Muslim retrogression in English education was to be found in the relative absence among them of those middle classes which alone among the Hindus availed themselves of English education. As a proof of the extent to which the students belonging to the moderately well-to-do middle classes, mainly Hindu in composition, attended the colleges educating up to the B.A. standard of the Calcutta University, the example of the Presidency College may be cited. In his evidence before the Hunter Commission of 1882, Charles H. Tawney, the Principal of the College, pointed out that the proportion of students of the upper, middle and lower classes in the Presidency College was respectively 23,308 and 0.6.⁶

A public discussion as to the system of education that would best suit the Muslims, and an increasing awareness on the part of the Muslims themselves of their glaring disproportion in the services (the natural result of their educational backwardness), marked the beginning of Muslim activism. This was backed up by the desire of the British bureaucracy to do something for their neglected Muslim subjects in the better interests of governance, and to secure the loyalty of an ill-disposed but important community. The line of thought and action became separatist as both the nature of the problem and its solution resulted in the adoption of special measures designed exclusively for the Muslims. In the sixties

and seventies of the nineteenth century, Muslim education became the subject of much debate and controversy. With the holocaust of the Revolt of 1857 still fresh in memory, the spirit which motivated the educational policy of the Government for the Muslims in particular, was typified in a minute recorded by the Governor-General Canning on 20 June 1860: 'The more the students can be brought to appreciate the usefulness of the education which we give to them in an Institution which they are disposed to regard with respect, and with some degree of pride, the better security we shall have for a contented and loyal disposition in themselves, and in their children.' The subject was 'of the highest political importance', remarked the Hon'ble Justice J. B. Phear, presiding over a meeting at the Bengal Social Science Association on 30 January 1868. He pointed out that no opportunities should be lost of conciliating the Muslims by a spirit of fairness and justice as it was experienced not long ago that the disaffection of the followers of Islam 'may be a serious evil'.⁸ On the same day, Abdul Latif read an essay entitled 'A Paper on Mahomedan Education' at the Bengal Social Science Association. He stated quite categorically that it was necessary to raise the Anglo-Persian Department of the Calcutta Madrassah first to the status of a high school and then to that of a college if equal opportunities were to be given to the Muslims as the Hindus had already received in the matter of western education.⁹ It was, however, the Rev. James Long who viewed the problem from an angle which unwittingly anticipated the future course of action that was adopted with reference to Muslim education. Drawing the attention of the Government to the deplorable condition of the Muslims, Long recommended the supply of European professors of Arabic and Persian, the establishment of scholarships, the co-study of Persian and English and the opening of Government employ to the Muslims on the basis of a special test. This would, in his opinion, 'open up a new career to the neglected Moslems of Bengal, a measure conducive to peace, as well as to the elevation of an important class of her Majesty's Indian subjects'.¹⁰

While all quarters were equally convinced of the practical uselessness of the Arabic Department in the Calcutta

Madrasah, the British statesmen dealing with the problem evinced a conscious desire not to excite hostility in the community whom it was their object to carry with them. The Muslim leaders were also in favour of the latter's circumspect policy, apprehensive that any sudden and violent change might react adversely on the Anglo-Persian Department which was operating quite successfully. The vast majority of conservative Muslims had a genuine desire to perpetuate the time-honoured image of the Calcutta Madrasah as a revered place for the study of their 'National Classics'. As the Government did not venture to abolish the Madrasah on 'political, educational and financial grounds', the question of reforming the system became the burning issue of the day. The minds of the educated and enlightened members of the Muhammadan community were in a state of agitation, and they were eagerly expecting that after the many years of confusion that their education had suffered from mismanagement and neglect on the part of the authorities, some favourable orders would be passed by the Government to afford them relief. Time was also opportune. The era of Muslim rethinking *vis-a-vis* modern conditions was well-matched with the mood of their rulers and statesmen who were inclined to reconsider the salient features of their educational policy in the light of past errors and injustices, inasmuch as they affected the followers of Islam. Throughout the decade of the sixties, during the administration of three successive Lieutenant-Governors, Sir John Peter Grant, Sir Cecil Beadon and Sir William Grey, constant and growing attention was paid to the cause of education in Bengal with special reference to the wants and wishes of the Muslim community. This change in attitude was particularly significant in the light of the educational measures undertaken during the first half of the nineteenth century in concert with the progressive Hindus. As the Muslims of that period sedulously stood aloof, no attempt was made to adapt the institutions and system of education to the needs of their lives, or the peculiarities of their society. The success of these measures kept from view their imperfections, as far as the backward communities were concerned. With the passage of time, the steadily increasing depression of the Muslim element in the services and society attracted notice,

and the Muslims were initially blamed for not availing themselves of the means of instruction placed at their disposal by an enlightened Government. Though this was partially true, yet this easy solution did not satisfy all. It began to be felt that the operations of the Government and its policy, in point of fact, were one-sided. Efforts were made in the subsequent years to remedy the mistake. Testifying to the deep interest taken by the members of the Government individually in the 'great and good work' of effecting the regeneration of the Muslims, *the Hindoo Patriot* in its issue of 26 October 1863, remarked that 'the present is a turning point in their national existence in India', and that 'their leaders will commit a fatal mistake if they let slip this golden opportunity to regenerate their co-religionists who form one-sixth of the population of India'.¹¹

The close of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies of the nineteenth century witnessed a sudden outburst of excessive bureaucratic sympathy for the Muslims. The publication of the celebrated book *The Indian Musalmans* by W. W. Hunter in 1871, written under the active patronage of the Viceroy Lord Mayo, made a sensational impact on contemporary Anglo-Indian and Muslim opinion. By a process of specious reasoning Hunter concluded that the failure of the Muslim élite in Bengal to secure government education and well-paid jobs contributed to the wider appeal of the *Wahhabi* and *Faraizi* movements in that province. The results of Hunter's enquiry, and his thinly disguised plea for official favouritism to Muslims in the matter of civil employment and for combining Muslim religious instruction with western education,¹² very largely influenced the ideas of prominent Muslim leaders like Abdul Latif, Syed Ahmad Khan and Syed Ameer Ali. 'They became the stock-in-trade of Muslim representations and of most Anglo-Indian comment on the subject in the years to come.'¹³ Muslim leaders and writers henceforward taking their cue from Hunter began to explain away their causes of decline by holding the British and the Hindus responsible. 'This negative and uncritical approach to history has dominated Muslim thought ever since.'¹⁴ However, prior to the publication of Hunter's book, a series of three articles appeared in the *Pioneer* of Allahabad in the summer of 1869

and were most probably written by Hunter himself.¹⁵ Simultaneously with their publication, the Bengal Government appointed a commission to enquire into the question of Muslim education in July 1869 in the province. After the submission of an elaborate report by the above commission on 1 December, 1869, Sir William Grey, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, in course of a private meeting with the Viceroy pointed out the inadequacy of the Government measures adopted for Muslim education. Sometime in the middle of 1871, Abdul Latif also met the Viceroy personally and drew his attention to the neglect of Muslim education by the Government and the mismanagement of the Mohsin funds. Lord Mayo in a note dated 26 June 1871, expressed his opinion that as regards the Muhammadan population, 'our present system of education is to a great extent a failure', and that 'we have not only failed to attract or attach the sympathies and confidence of a large and important section of the community, but... we have caused positive disaffection, as is suggested by O'Kinealy and others', inasmuch as the Muhammadans find that they 'are unable to participate in the material advantage which the Government education has conferred on the Hindu'.¹⁶ Mayo's note on Muslim education shows clearly that he and his senior officials recognized that politically the time had come for a change of course. 'A resolution of this kind... would have an excellent effect on the feelings of the Mohamedan population at this moment',¹⁷ remarked the Viceroy. In the Government of India Resolution No. 300 dated 7 August 1871, the Viceroy drew the attention of several local governments and administrations to the question whether without infringing on the fundamental principles of the existing educational system, some general measures in regard to Muhammadan education could not be adopted, and whether more encouragement could not be given in the University courses to Arabic and Persian Literature.¹⁸ The above mentioned note and resolution taken together were significantly symptomatic of the omissions and commissions made by the Government in relation to the past and future developments. The admission of the Government's 'failure' with regard to Muslim education and reference to the Muslims as a 'large and important class whose confidence had to be won' in fulfilment of a 'political object' marked

the begining of a new reaction. The Government of India's resolution of August 1871 conceded in principle almost everything that Muslim leaders, like Abdul Latif had been demanding, namely, the use of Urdu as the medium of instruction for Muslims in primary and secondary schools, increased state assistance for exclusively Muslim educational institutions, and the combination of English education with the study of Arabic and Persian. Encouraged by the knowledge that the Government was willing to oblige them, Muslim leaders and their Anglo-Indian friends stepped up their campaign for a speedy and effective implementation of the resolution. The assassination of the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court J. P. Norman in September 1871, and of the Viceroy, Lord Mayo, in February 1872, by alleged *Wahhabis* 'instead of killing conciliation, determined the British to confirm it'.

The Resolution of 1871 reached the Government of Bengal when George Campbell was the Lieutenant-Governor of the province. He took a particular interest in Muslim education in the province, for he was astonished to find when he took charge of his office, that 'the great Mahomedan population of Bengal' was 'especially without the means of instruction'.¹⁹ The educational statistics for the year 1872-73 pointed to 4 per cent Muhammadan students in the general colleges, 5½ per cent in the special colleges and over 19½ per cent in schools of all classes.²⁰ Supporting in the main the instruction offered in the Anglo-Persian Department, the Lieutenant-Governor issued orders on 4 December 1871, whereby 'as a special concession to the Muhammadans there would be a special class' to teach Arabic and Persian after their own fashion wherever there was a sufficient demand to justify the supply. 'No Hindus will be admitted to this class, which will be special and denominational.'²¹ It was on the ground that it was a political object to encourage the Muhammadans—'to bribe them' as it were—that the Lieutenant-Governor offered education in Arabic and Persian to the Muhammadans in return of their accepting an English education and instruction in Muhammadan practical arts and sciences. It was under the auspices of O'Kinealy, Magistrate of Mymensingh, who was interested in the question of Muhammadan education, and Syed Abdoollah, Subordinate Judge in

that district, that a Muhammadan class was established at Mymensingh in 1869. But it proved a failure from the commencement. The wisdom of the policy was perhaps rightly doubted by the Collector of Mymensingh, H. J. Reynolds, who in his letter to the Commissioner of the Dacca Division remarked that he was utterly unable to understand why, in order to induce the Bengali Muhammadans to learn to read and write their own vernacular, it should be thought necessary to bribe them by the offer and instruction in a foreign language 'in which they were never likely to attain any proficiency, and which could not possibly be of the slightest use to nine-tenths of them'.²²

From special concessions and special classes, separate schools were logically the next step. This was precisely what the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal suggested in his Minute of 4 December 1871. The officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal, C. Bernard in his note showed that not a single member of the inspecting agency was a Muhammadan; there was scarcely, if at all, a Muhammadan in the ordinary ranks of school masters of Government schools; the Bengal educational department could be said to be 'a Hindu institution'. The latter monopolized all the places below the highest, and all the executive management. This, in the opinion of the Secretary, undoubtedly placed the Muhammadans at some real disadvantage and certainly gave reasonable offence to their prejudices and sensibilities. Therefore, in order to encourage them it was deemed necessary to allow 'a few special or denominational Muhammadan places of education, in which they may not be depressed by a disadvantageous competition with the Hindoos in Hindoo-managed institution'.²³ The problem of justifying the devotion of provincial funds to special Muhammadan education was solved by Mohsin's endowment which seemed to supply the legitimate means. This course had been suggested at least a decade earlier by Abdul Latif in connection with the Mohsin Madrassah at Hooghly. The annual allotment of about half a lakh of rupees from the income of a Muhammadan endowment for the support of an English College chiefly resorted to by the members of the Hindu community was felt by the Muslims to be 'a misappropriation and a wrong done to the Mohomedans who were themselves so much

in need of funds for the improvement of their own education'.²⁴ In a report submitted in December 1861, Abdul Latif set forth a measure for making the Hooghly Madrassah the basis of a sound system of Anglo-Arabic education, 'exclusively' for the members of the Muhammadan community, for the full carrying out of which the Mohsin Endowment Funds appeared to him to be ample.²⁵ To this end Latif strongly recommended the withdrawal of the entire contribution from the Mohsin Funds for the Hooghly College. Abdul Latif was one of the earliest to plead for an exclusive institution for the Muslims in place of an existing general college. It is particularly interesting in this connection that the Commissioner of Dacca, which had around it a very large Muhammadan population, reported in 1871 that Khajah Abdul Ghani, C.S.I. along with many influential Muhammadan gentlemen wished to have a Muhammadan College at Dacca where students might learn English or Arabic. The memorialists especially said that they did not require Bengali or Hindustani to be taught at this college, as their children learnt these languages sufficiently well at home. They laid much stress on having a European gentleman, with some knowledge of Persian and Arabic, at the head of the Dacca Madrassah. The Commissioner further reported that a piece of land would be given for the site of the *Madrassah* at Dacca, and expressed the hope that eventually wealthy Muhammadans would come forward to endow such an institution. The government was also too willing to give every assistance if the Muhammadan gentlemen of Dacca furnished the funds for a separate college of their own.²⁶ Had this proposal for a separate college for the Muslims at Dacca materialized it would have surely given the Bengali Muslims a decisive start over their Aligarh brethren.

The scheme of reforms envisaged by Lord Mayo and Sir George Campbell found fruition in the issue of a Resolution by Lord Northbrook on 13 June 1875, which reaffirmed in stronger and more definite terms the policy enunciated in the Resolution of 1871. It may be interesting to trace behind the memorable Resolution of 1875, the influence of one Lord Hobart (who had a strong predilection for the Muhammadans) on the Viceroy. In a letter to Northbrook dated 1 June 1872, Hobart proposed that the Muslims ought to be 'coaxed' into

Government schools by 'some judicious modification' of the existing educational arrangements, and that mean while the Viceroy should take measures to prevent the Muslims from being 'extruded' from the public service 'by the more vivacious, covetous, and self-seeking Hindu'.²⁷ There were also express instructions from the Secretary of State, the Duke of Argyll, who wrote to Northbrook that if there be any real special grievances which affect the Muslim population, 'which we can fairly remove, by all means let it be done'.²⁸ By the Resolution of 1873 the proceeds of the Mohsin Fund set free from the general purposes of the Hooghly College were utilized to defray the cost of Muhammadan *madrassahs* with attached boarding houses and to reduce the tuition fees of Muslim students in their own educational institutions at Dacca, Chittagong and Rajshahi. With a liberality which more or less constituted an 'unexpected concession' in favour of the Muslims, the Viceroy made an addition of Rs 50,000 to the Government grant for education in Bengal, 'to compensate the Provincial assignment for the specialisation of the Mohsin Endowments'. Provision was also made for the foundation of special scholarships for Muhammadan boys and for the payment of two-thirds of the fees of the Muhammadan pupils reading in English schools and colleges. After many years of doubt and discussion the noble endowment of the Calcutta Maddrassah was decided to be preserved and maintained for the sole and exclusive benefit of the Muslim community in Bengal. Northbrook moreover expressed a wish that Muhammadan *madrassahs* or Departments should be grafted on to existing colleges and high schools at the centres of Muhammadan population in Bengal. These orders proved a crowning success for the efforts of the Mahomedan Literary Society. In an Address presented to Northbrook on 15 September 1873, the Mahomedan Literary Society noted with satisfaction that the Government was prepared to promote the 'diffusion and advancement of real knowledge' among the Muhammadans of their Indian empire. The Muslims had only to make their wants and necessities clearly understood, and their rulers were 'only too anxious to devise schemes for meeting them...'²⁹ The subject at that time attracted the attention of the Press. On 24 January 1876, the *Hindoo Patriot* felt happy to observe that

English education was spreading among the Muhammadans. It remarked: 'as the tide has begun to flow we think there is no chance of its being stemmed'.³⁰ The Lieutenant-Governor Sir Richard Temple in his resolution on the education report of the Muhammadans for 1875 remarked that the necessity of reporting on Muhammadan education in a separate chapter was in itself, to some extent, a confession of failure, as showing either that the general scheme of instruction was not suited to the requirements of 'this important section of the community', or at least that the Muhammadans have failed to take advantage of it. 'But the statistics given in the report show that whatever may have been the deficiencies in former times satisfactory progress is being made in Muhammadan education.'³¹ It further noticed that in the year under consideration Muhammadan pupils in Government and aided institutions increased by 8 per cent and that the greatest increase was in the higher and middle English schools showing 'that the benefits of Western studies are now more generally understood and appreciated by the Muhammadan community'.³² However, the number of Muhammadans who completed an academic career was still extremely small. But significantly enough in the Calcutta Madrassah many students expressed a wish at this time to be relieved of a portion of their Arabic course in order to be able to take up English. In the newly opened Madrassah at Rajshahi though the study of English was optional nearly all the Muslim boys had elected to learn English. In the Dacca Madrassah the European system of mathematical teaching had been adopted at the special request of the Muhammadan member of the Committee. 'These facts are full of significance and cannot fail to exercise an important influence on the generation now growing up to manhood,'³³ remarked the Lieutent-Governor.

But among the Muslims themselves there was a wide divergence of opinion on the subject of their education. On one side were the modernists of the old school represented by the Mahomedan Literary Society group. Ranged against them were the radical enthusiasts represented by the later generation of English-educated Muslim youths of Bengal, more permeated with western influence. But one fails to come across in the Muslim community the counterparts of the philo-

sophical radicals of the Hindu College suffering from a temporary but overt Anglo-mania. As a matter of fact there was 'no Muslim intellectual capitulation to the western world'. Muslim modernists like Syed Ahmad Khan, Abdul Latif, Nawab Ameer Ali, Syed Ameer Ali and others 'who wished for a *modus vivendi* argued from Muslim premises and from Muslim authority'.³⁴ The introduction of English education among the Muhammadans by the Government produced a number of enthusiasts, who were by no means in favour of the policy and principle under which the Government maintained and conducted the Arabic department of the Bengal madrassahs.

The leader of this new reaction was Syed Ameer Ali (1849-1928). His father who was settled in Calcutta was persuaded by Malet, the Judge of Orissa, and Dr Mowat, the D.P.I., to give an English education to his sons. This acquaintance was a significant turning point in the history of the family. Although in those early days English education was not in favour with the Muslims, Ali's father felt that the time was coming when it would be an important factor in the growth of the people.³⁵ Himself a student of the Mohsinia College, Ameer Ali was the first M.A. of the above mentioned institution and was awarded a Senior Scholarship by his mentor, Robert Thwaytes, which he retained for two years. The influence of 'English men of the right type', men like Thwaytes, Brailford (Professor of English language and literature in the Mohsinia College), Ronald Cockerell (Magistrate and Collector, Hooghly District) and Doctor Congreve, 'the sage of Mecklenburg Square', greatly stimulated Ali's ideals and fashioned his tastes and sympathies. Having taken his Law degree, Ameer Ali was enrolled as a pleader, when acting upon the advice of Thwaytes, he applied for and secured the State Scholarship established by Lord Kimberley for selected Indian students to pursue their studies in England. His four years' stay in England (1869-73) enabled him to study law and to cultivate the friendship of intellectuals, diplomats and politicians. In 1873 Ameer Ali published in London *A Critical Examination of the Life and Teaching of Mohammad*, which formed the basis of his more famous *The Spirit of Islam* (1891). Both the works intended mainly for a European audience made a deep impress on the minds of the

English educated Muslims. While others before Ameer Ali had tried to show that Islam was not opposed to progress, Ameer Ali identified Islam with progress and characterized it as a religion with all the modern virtues. Having returned from England, Ameer Ali enrolled himself as an advocate of the Calcutta High Court in February 1873. He aptly summed up his difficulties when he remarked, 'the English solicitors looked upon me as an interloper; the Hindus frankly disliked me, whilst the Moslems considered me a renegade because of the English method of life I had acquired'.³⁶ 'His co-religionists saw very little of him in Calcutta', wrote S. Khuda Bukhsh, 'but from his workshop in Harrington Street he fought their battles, and through the Central Mohammedan Association voiced their hopes, ventilated their grievances and displayed and demonstrated his influence.... But by nature and habit he was more a leader of thought than a leader of men. It was the closet not the forum that appealed to or attracted him.'³⁷

Shortly after Ameer Ali's return to India, Lord Northbrook's memorable Resolution on Muhammadan education was passed to give further encouragement to Arabic and Persian education. As early as 1867 certain advanced Muhammadan thinkers were of opinion that the Arabic Department of the Calcutta Madrassah should be broken up altogether and the Madrassah funds appropriated in support of a system of education essentially modern and European. But Nawab Abdul Latif was opposed to this policy. In his opinion the abolition of the madrassahs would constitute an impolitic act, as the importance of maintaining institutions for the cultivation of the higher oriental learning was 'both politically and intellectually very great'. The leader of the advanced group, Syed Ameer Ali, on the contrary was more in favour of remodelling the Bengal madrassahs in the light of the modern and secular needs of the day. 'Not only did he encourage a sterile narcissism among English educated Muslims', but he created an 'educational chasm between the modern-educated and the traditionally educated Muslim...'³⁸ This marked the beginning of the Latif-Ali controversy which continued to be ventilated throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century by their respective organizations—the Mohomedan Literary Society

and the National Mohamedan Association. Around Ameer Ali gathered those Muslims who found Latif too conservative and his programme of self-help ineffective. But their efforts to replace the madrassah system of education with modern English education were set at naught by the leaders of the 'older-fashioned Mohammedans'. Unlike his great north Indian contemporary Syed Ahmad Khan, Latif sought 'to conciliate Muslim prejudices, not to fight them'. Educated in Government colleges, affecting English dress and manners, knowing little Persian or Arabic 'the language of good Society' among Calcutta Muslims, Ameer Ali and his coterie were regarded as unsound by the men of the Literary Society. In their educational schemes they ignored religion and their leader was a Shia.³⁹

The *Englishman* in its issue of 1 November 1873, remarked that the Muslim community of Bengal at least was so split up into hostile factions, so much in the position of a house divided against itself, that its representation by any single society was practically impossible. Under these circumstances, however respectably the Muhomedan Literary Society might have been constituted, there was necessarily a large number of the followers of the Prophet, great and small, who could always maintain that they were not represented by it even in an informal manner. The head of the advanced group of thinkers, Ameer Ali founded in 1877⁴⁰ the National Mahomedan Association at Calcutta with the object of effecting the political and cultural regeneration of the Muhammadans of India and of obtaining from the Government a recognition of their just and reasonable claims. The organizers of the Association felt, in particular, that the opinions elicited by the Government from the few literary and scientific societies of the Muhammadans that had been formed earlier, hardly represented the views of the leaders of thought among them, who were alive to the exigencies of the times. 'The factions and cliques into which the Muhammadan community was divided not only prevented their acting in concert with their Hindoo and Christian fellow-subjects on general questions of public policy, but absolutely precluded the possibility of collective action in the way of social progress and reform.'⁴¹ In order to obviate the difficulties under which the Muham-

madans had long laboured the National Mohamedan Association was instituted for the protection and conservation of the general interests of the community.

Meanwhile during the years that elapsed circumstances had greatly changed. The wishes of the Muhammadan community for larger facilities of instruction in English, and the desire that the provision of such facilities should take the form of separate establishments rather than of concessions to colleges already existing, became more pronounced. Against the background of these developments, the National Mahomedan Association in 1882 submitted to the Marquis of Ripon a comprehensive memorial on the subject of Muhammadan grievances and claims. In paragraph 14 of the Memorial it was stated that the introduction of the English language as the official language of India, the language which opened the door to preferment and honour, carried with it the obligation on the part of Government that 'measures should be adopted and means afforded to facilitate the study of English by the Muhammadans'.⁴² On the basis of an elaborate list of charges on which the British Government was arraigned for Muslim depression, which approximated closely to the views of W. W. Hunter, the view was advanced by the memorialists that Muhammadan decadence was not the result of 'Muhammadan apathy or of any unwillingness on their part to study the language of an alien race'.⁴³ At any rate, whatever may have been the feeling in former times there was not the smallest doubt that within the last quarter of a century, a strong desire had grown up among the Muslims for the study of English language and literature. Their backwardness was due to their general poverty. It was therefore that the memorialists were compelled to urge upon the Government 'the absolute need of making especial provisions for Muhammadan education' as were being offered to the Eurasian community. The memorialists further stated that their large funds appertaining to the various endowments, which till then existed under the control and direction of the Government should be scrupulously and religiously applied to promote Muhammadan education,⁴⁴ and that a Commission should be appointed to enquire into the nature of these endowments and accretions, 'whether they should or should not be applied

to promote Muhammadan education'. In view of the fact that the Muhammadan element was most inadequately represented on the Education Commission appointed about the same time, the memorialists urged the appointment of a separate commission to enquire into the subject of Muhammadan education and devise a practical scheme for the purpose. Abdul Latif was asked by the Bengal Government to advance his views on the issues raised in the memorial of 1882. He demurred to the memorial 'being accepted as the exponent of the Mahomedan community'.⁴⁵ He differed with the memorialists on various points and did not agree with them on the advisability of the appointment of a special commission by the Government to enquire into the whole question of Muslim education. The Government of Bengal concurred with the views of Latif, but a few years later gave effect to a specific proposal of the National Mahomedan Association by appointing a Committee to enquire into the Muhammadan endowment funds. This memorial more generally did a great deal to draw the attention of the Government to Muslim feelings, and its use by the Government of India which circulated it to all provincial Governments, ensured that attention was widespread.⁴⁶ As Johnston said, the memorial 'assumed a kind of National significance' and was 'deeply pathetic as coming from the former conquerors and rulers of India'.⁴⁷ 'This memorial will give us a good deal of trouble', wrote A. Mackenzie, Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, 'and must be gone into very completely. It is a mere reproduction of Chapter IV of Hunter's "Indian Mussalmans"—a work which was felt at the time of its issue to be full of exaggerations and sensational statements'.⁴⁸ The case, as put in the Memorial, was mainly a Bengal case, and therefore required forthwith a minute examination by the Lieutenant-Governor of all the allegations and pleas put forward in it. The attitude of the Bengal Government to the Memorial under consideration was best brought out in a note from A. P. Macdonell, Officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal, to the Secretary to the Government of India dated 14 October 1882. It was pointed out that the Association comprised among its members many intelligent and well-educated men who had themselves thrown off the fetters of custom, and had

fully benefited by English education and western culture. In view of this the Lieutenant-Governor Rivers Thompson found it difficult to believe that 'the exploded arguments and retrograde views' expressed in the memorial could have been seriously advanced by these gentlemen, and he preferred to accept the representations then before the Government less as an argument to be judged on its merits, than as an earnest effort on the part of the prominent Muhammadans of the day to advance the condition of their coreligionists. To such efforts the Lieutenant-Governor, was willing to accord the sympathy and where possible the support and assistance of his Government.⁴⁹

Turning to the remedial measures proposed by the National Mahomedan Association, viz., the adoption of a vigorous anglicizing educational policy, and preferential treatment for the Muslims as a community, the Government of Bengal pointed out that for several years past the question of the establishment of a Mahomedan college in Calcutta had been before the Bengal Government, and that it was urged anew on the attention of the late Lieutenant-Governor by the Honourable Syed Ameer Hossein in 1881, then a Member of the Bengal Legislative Council. In his evidence before the Education Commission Maulavi Syed Amir Hossain remarked that 'the cry amongst the Mohammedans was for a college of their own teaching up to the B.A. standard like the Aligarh Muhammadan College, with Mussalman atmosphere and Mussalman association—a college to which they may look up to as their *Alma Mater*, just as the Hindus look to the Presidency College established on the superstructure of the late Hindu College'.⁵⁰ Assuming that the establishment of such a college as proposed would go to gratify the sentiments of the Muslims, he further added that 'the general sentiments of such an important community should carry some weight in the deliberations of our rulers'.⁵¹ In a memorandum presented to the Education Commission, the National Mahomedan Association at the instance of Ameer Ali recommended to the Government, the abolition of the madrassahs at Hooghly, Dacca, Chittagong and Rajshahi, and the expenses thus saved to be utilized for the purpose of launching an English College at Calcutta exclusively for the Muslims.

What was particularly significant in the views mentioned above was the blatant manner in which both Hossain and Ali propounded the necessity of a 'purely Muhammadan College' in the metropolis teaching up to the B.A. course. And one of the principal reasons cited for the above necessity was that the Presidency College was situated 'in a quarter essentially Hindu...' The proposals of Ameer Hossain and Ameer Ali were not ultimately accepted by the Bengal Government on the ground that 'they did not really tend to promote the permanent interests of Mohammadans in Bengal'.

However, an instance of the change even in official feeling on the subject was evident in a letter from the Director of Public Instruction (No. 5609) dated 9 September 1882. Croft, who early in 1881 had reported adversely on the establishment of a Muhammadan college in Calcutta, later doubted whether the policy pursued by the Government with regard to Muhammadan education was not mistaken.⁵² The elevation of the Calcutta Madrassah to the status of a college seemed the necessary outcome of the agitation on the subject, and a legitimate concession to the reasonable demands of those interested in it. On the basis of personal observation the Lieutenant-Governor Rivers Thompson was convinced that 'neither from an educational nor political point of view', was it advisable any longer to maintain the Madrassahs at Dacca, Rajshahi and Chittagong. The instruction conveyed in them was unsuited to the wants of the Muhammadan community of the time, 'being rather calculated to inspire useless regrets for an irrevocable past than to prepare boys for the competition and trials of modern life'.⁵³ The Lieutenant-Governor believed that the desire of the Muhammadan community generally at that time for a purely Oriental education was overrated. However strong it might once have been, it was showing manifest and growing signs of decay. In his view, the abolition of these Madrassahs and the appropriation of the funds for the support of a Muhammadan college in Calcutta would be hailed with satisfaction by all intelligent Muhammadans. The Lieutenant-Governor further wished that the enlightened members of the Muhammadan community should pressurize their less forward co-religionists who administered the endowment funds. And to the same and 'the members of the National

Mahomedan Association should use their powerful influence to counteract the retrograde policy adopted by those who oppose the spread of English education'.⁵⁴ The views of the Lieutenant-Governor were however countered by the President of the Education Commission, W. W. Hunter, who acting on the advice of Abdul Latif, doubted the desirability of closing down any of the madrassahs established in various parts of Bengal. The latter believed that there was a 'real and legitimate demand' among the Muhammadan community for the kind of learning which was imparted there.⁵⁵ In a letter (No. 4607) dated 17 March 1883, to the Secretary to the Government of India, Hunter (President of the Education Commission) sought to justify the adoption of a policy of separate treatment for the Muhammadans. The Commission, though not admitting as a general principle the desirability of establishing denominational institutions, were also aware 'that the circumstances of the Mohammadan community in Bengal are in important respects exceptional... Special cases need special treatment and in that view the Commission have come to the conclusion that it is desirable to open college classes in the Madrassahs, teaching to the First Arts Examination although not to higher standard'.⁵⁶ They believed that the establishment of such a college would appeal to what has been called 'a sentiment of unquestioned force', and would greatly stimulate the demand for higher education among the Muhammadans. The chief requirement was to provide Muhammadan students with an incentive to enter, and with the means of entering on a course of collegiate instruction. But in spite of the best intentions and efforts of the Government to foster Muhammadan education by 'special treatment', and the creation of 'special Muhammadan scholarships' which rose to 134 by 1887, Muhammadan education in the last decade of the nineteenth century still showed no signs of marked improvement. The ratio of Muhammadan pupils receiving secondary education was only 14 per cent against 81 per cent in the case of Hindus; while of students receiving collegiate education, only 5 per cent were Muhammadans, whereas 90 per cent were Hindus. But the proportion was more or less equally balanced in the case of the pupils of the school going age.⁵⁷

The matter of according special treatment to the Muslims as was recommended by the Hunter Commission in the sphere of education did not pass without opposition. A minute of dissent was recorded by D. M. Barbour, Secretary to the Government of India in the Financial Department. Barbour did not think it possible 'to justify the taxation of the general community' for the special encouragement of Muslim education which was recommended to be regarded 'as legitimate charge on Local on Municipal and on Provincial Funds'. The system of special scholarships for Muslims 'in all classes of schools maintained from public funds' involved in the opinion of Barbour 'injustice to other classes' and he believed on the contrary that improvement should 'come from their own efforts', rather than by attempting to protect them 'against the competition of other classes'.⁵⁸ The Lieutenant-Governor Rivers Thompson also disliked the idea of special scholarships and separate schools for Muslims only. He remarked: 'Little is gained by such separatism.'⁵⁹ But the Government of India in its resolution of October 1884, on the Report of the Education Commission proposed to give 'separate consideration' to the whole problem of Muslim education.⁶⁰ 'These pronouncements, and the whole tenor of the Education Commission's Report, alike prompted criticism from the Hindu press.'⁶¹ As against the Government decision to establish separate scholarships for the Muslims, the *Hindoo Patriot* on 23 August 1886, complained that such a grant would 'amount to heavy loss of encouragement to Hindu youths and young men of other religions'.⁶²

The subject of providing special facilities for the education of Muhammadans, in response to the recommendations of the Education Commission and the Memorial addressed by the Central National Mahomedan Association, occupied the Lieutenant-Governor's attention during 1884-85. The result of the initial attitude of Sir Rivers Thompson, who had attacked somewhat violently the facts adduced by the memorialists in support of their claims, was that the Government of India Resolution of 15 July 1885 did not at all prove satisfactory to the Muhammadans. It was indeed, 'regarded by those inimical to Muhammadan interests as a snub to the Mussalman Community'.⁶³ But subsequently, the Committee of the Central

National Mahomedan Association noted with satisfaction that the Lieutenant-Governor had occasion to modify his views. By his Resolutions of 8 and 15 October 1886, he 'substantially admitted the correctness of every fact urged'. The Central Committee of the National Mahomedan Association claimed that they were in a position to state that the Resolution of 1885 was the outcome of a generous and sympathizing spirit on the part of the Viceroy, and of an anxious desire, in the face of the reports furnished by the local authorities 'to deal fairly, wisely and legitimately with the Muhammadan claims'.

It was indeed unfortunate that the two champions of Muhammadan education in Bengal, Nawab Abdul Latif and Syed Ameer Ali, could not evolve an *entente-cordiale* for the achievement of one and the same purpose, viz., the cultural and educational regeneration of their co-religionists. By the eighties of the nineteenth century it was practically admitted on all hands that the madrassah system of education was becoming increasingly unpopular. Yet the Nawab who laboured for a period of nearly half a century for the spread of English education among his co-religionists, endeavoured at the same time to maintain among them the study of Arabic and Persian. The policy of encouragement of Muhammadan education through madrassahs and through subjects of Muhammadan learning failed after a decade of experiment. A pragmatist to the core, Ameer Ali realized from the very beginning what Latif failed to perceive, viz., the necessity of remodelling the Bengal madrassahs on a new basis and bringing them into harmony with the ethical and secular needs of the day. In his evidence before the Education Commission Ali remarked, 'a dead weight, however, seems still to press down the Muhammadan community. The mistake which was committed in 1872 was not to make English compulsory on all students who sought middle-class and high education. The consequence is that the only kind of education which is necessary to enable them to retrieve the ground they have lost within the last fifty years is in a most unsatisfactory condition'.⁶⁴ In course of a questionnaire he pointed out that it was sufficiently proved that the scheme devised by Sir George Campbell in 1872 to promote a purely oriental edu-

cation among the Muhammadans in the Eastern Districts of Bengal had proved a practical failure. His advice was to make English compulsory in all middle-class and high schools and colleges. He further claimed that the general consensus of educated Muhammadan opinion was conclusively and emphatically in favour of his view. It was utterly useless, according to him, to keep up a department for oriental education exclusively at the Mohsin College at Hooghly. The promotion of a purely oriental education among any class of the Indian subjects of the Crown, was, in Ali's opinion 'fraught with many mischievous consequences'. A Central Muhammadan College at Calcutta, where students, who matriculated either here or in the *mofussil*, might gather together to pursue the higher branches of study, where their requirements as to knowledge of their own classics can be carefully attended to, is a matter on the necessity of which there can be no two opinions.⁶⁵

The controversy between the two schools of opinion raged throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It was mainly through the exertions of Abdul Latif and the representations of the Mahomedan Literary Society that the Calcutta Madrassah was preserved on its own basis and the Mohsin Madrassahs were established to give effect to the deliberations of successive Governments. It was chiefly due to his influence that 'two parallel systems of education, one general and the other madrasa, were perpetuated in Bengal'.⁶⁶ While as late as December 1899, Ameer Ali as the Chairman of the thirteenth session of the All India Muhammadan Educational Conference remarked, that few could deny that the Calcutta Madrassah had not been worked altogether on satisfactory lines, so as to achieve the purpose of its founder.⁶⁷ Personally he saw no reason why the Calcutta Madrassah could not be remodelled on the lines of the Aligarh College, or why the education which was purported to be given there, should not be of such a character as would enable the Muhammadan youths to become useful and honourable members of an advancing society. He concluded with a warning that 'in the struggle for existence' that the Muhammadans were engaged in, 'it would be suicidal to subordinate the modern side of education to the classical'.⁶⁸ It was however

on the issue of the utilization of Muhammadan *wakfs* for purposes of education that the Latif-Ali controversy reached its climax. The bone of contention centred round the belief entertained by the Mahomedan Literary Society that the National Mahomedan Association was anxious to divert the Muhammadan endowments for religious instruction to purposes of general education. Regretting the attitude assumed by the Mahomedan Literary Society, the National Mahomedan Association in its Memorandum II remarked that it has always advocated the study of English in conjunction with Arabic and Persian, and its contention was that the students who devoted themselves to the study of English along with their own classics should not be excluded from the benefit of any *wakfs* that were available for educational purposes. The Committee of the Association regretted that in this, as in other notable instances, 'personal jealousy have stood in the way of the good of the community and have nearly frustrated the efforts of this Association to promote national welfare'. As against the suggestion of the Mahomedan Literary Society that there was 'a hue and cry' against the enquiry of the Endowment Committee, the Association denied that, except perhaps among those whose interests were involved in the maintenance of the *status quo*, there was any opposition to the objects of the enquiry. On the contrary, the memorandum of the Association had been approved of and signed by leading Muhammadans in various parts of Bengal on behalf of their community.⁶⁹ Lastly the National Mahomedan Association pointed out a glaring inconsistency on the part of the Mahomedan Literary Society and its Secretary. In 1861 and again in 1868, Abdul Latif had urged upon the Government the advisability of allotting a portion of the Muhammadan *wakf* fund for the support of English education. It was somewhat strange that the Literary Society should now assume this hostile attitude, since the Central Association had been advocating the course of Muhammadan advancement on similar grounds. Even after the death of Abdul Latif, his son Abdur Rahman, the Honorary Secretary of the Mahomedan Literary Society noted with satisfaction that whatever Muhammadan classical education then remained under the wise policy of the Government would have vanished, 'if the views of reformers like Mr Justice Ameer

Ali were ever adopted by the Government, or accepted by the Muhammadan community.⁷⁰ It was notorious, Rahman further continued (because Ameer Ali occupied a prominent position among Muhammadans), that during the last quarter of a century, most of the latter's proposals on Muhammadan subjects, whenever presented before Government or the community, had not been accepted or adopted by either.⁷¹

The question of Muhammadan educational reform in Bengal got entangled from the very beginning with the problem of reorganizing the Calcutta Madrasah. One of the oldest institutions of the metropolis for the study of Muhammadan classics, the Calcutta Madrassah represented a stronghold of Muslim conservatism. Hence any attempt to reorganize or remodel it was bound to invite loud protests especially from a community with whom traditions died hard. It cannot but be regretted in retrospect that the Muslim leadership in Bengal failed to establish by dint of independent efforts, an institution like the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, though initiative for such a venture was forthcoming from certain quarters. There were many Muhammadans of wealth and liberality in Eastern Bengal who would have doubtless come forward with material assistance if attempts were made to start an institution (though not meant exclusively for the Muslims), where the Muslims could receive modern education along with their classical languages and literature. Instead, much precious time and energy were wasted in Bengal on debating and discussing the reforms to be effected in the Calcutta Madrassah. With Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the battle was fought and won once and for all. Consequently the conservative and the modernist viewpoints on Muslim education in Upper India came to be crystallized in two separate institutions—Deoband and Aligarh respectively. Moreover Syed Ahmad's spectacular success in northern India was largely due to the dissemination of his social and political ideas through Urdu which was the vernacular of that region. But the Bengali Muslims who were perhaps more in need of an institution like the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College than their brethren in the North-Western Provinces, lost their chance in spite of the best efforts of reformers like Syed Ameer Ali and Syed Amir Hossain, whose repeated attempts

were frustrated by the solid phalanx of bureaucratic and conservative Muslim opposition.

It was also unfortunate that in the sphere of Muslim mass education the wishes and grievances of the millions of Bengali-speaking Muslims, belonging for the most part to the cultivating classes, were represented by an élite minority who were in Bengal but refused to be a part of it. It was therefore natural that the organizations which were championed by Latif and Ali respectively failed to appeal to the bulk of their coreligionists. These *ashraf* Muslims definitely chose a shortsighted policy by harping on the difficulties of the Muslim peasantry who had to study in *pathshalas* where there was 'too much of Hindu influence,'⁷² and under Hindu teachers of English who did not know a word of Urdu. They particularly objected to the study of text-books which dealt with Hindu subjects and were written in a Sanskritized Bengali rather than in the Muslim Bengali patois. The masses were thus made aware of their backwardness along with a forced consciousness of their separate identity. But paradoxically enough, it was this Muslim mass retrogression in education which helped their leaders to bolster up the claim for special consideration and separate treatment. This small articulate *ashraf* community, dependent on the Government for its position and influence, was more immediately concerned with a particular aspect of its socio-economic problem—to secure job opportunities from a claim western education. Once the Government chose to accede to this viewpoint, separatist tendencies became a confirmed issue in Bengal politics.

A collateral aspect of Muhammadan education was the question of Muhammadan appointments which became a grievous issue along with education in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was generally maintained, mainly by the Muslim spokesmen, that for a number of years after the British had assumed the sovereignty of the Eastern Provinces of the Mughal Emperors, the Muslims were scrupulously retained in their position of power and wealth. The changes ushered in by Lord Cornwallis in the administrative and judicial systems ultimately affected Muslim prosperity to a material extent. But in spite of the status which the Hindu collectors of revenue had acquired under the permanent settle-

ment and the new system of judicature, the Muslims continued to occupy the front rank among the Indian communities. The Civil Lists of those days showed a proportion of 75 per cent of Muhammadans in the service of the State. It was, however, with Bentinck's administration that Muslim decadence really began. The abolition of Persian in 1837 and the promulgation of an order that office business should thenceforward be conducted either in English or in the provincial dialects resulted in throwing out of employment a considerable body of Muhammadan subordinate officers, who were totally dependent for their subsistence upon the pay of the Government. Meanwhile the English-educated Hindus gradually filled in the rank and file of Government service. A few unimportant offices remained in the hands of the Muslims. It was the Rev. James Long who drew the attention of the Government in 1869 to the necessity of opening Government employment to the Muslims on terms of special tests. Shortly after this, the publication of Hunter's celebrated book presenting the Muslim side of the case served as a sensational eye-opener to his contemporaries and frequent quotations from this book acquired an almost proverbial significance. The Officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal, C. Bernard, influenced to some extent the policy of the Lieutenant-Governor (Campbell) by pointing out the difficulties under which the Muslims had to labour in 'Hindoo-managed institutions'. The conglomerate impact of these developments resulted in the seventies in a favourable tilt in the balance of Government patronage for the Muslims. Before long the Muslims on their part realized the need for a more positive role and the man who took the lead in presenting an ardent though exaggerated appeal to the Government for the redress of their grievances was Syed Ameer Ali. The Memorial of 1882 pointed out that whilst radical changes were introduced in the administrative policy of the country rendering it necessary for all aspirants for office under Government to know the language of the rulers no order was passed making English education compulsory. Thus before the Muslims had quite awakened to the necessity of learning English, they were shut out from Government employment. Hardinge's Resolution of 10 October 1844, instructed all Government departments to give prefer-

ence to those with knowledge of English, in giving government appointments. On 19 August 1855, the Sudder Court issued a notification, ordering all candidates for Munsifships to prove their acquaintance with English law books. This rapid swing in the policy of officialdom from preference to English to making it obligatory hit the Muslims of Bengal hardest. The Muslims of Calcutta protested, and the order was materially modified on the suggestion of the Lieutenant-Governor. The *Friend of India* in its characteristic tone of partiality remarked that it was unjust to make English a *sine qua non* because it demanded knowledge which the Government itself had refused to impart. For years past the Muslims had claimed equal educational privileges with the Hindus. While the latter were instructed in English and the vernacular, the Muslims had asked for English and their vernacular, and were refused. They were asked to learn Bengali, a language for which they had 'a hearty though most unreasonable contempt'. It was only within a year following the opening of the Anglo-Persian department in the Calcutta Madrasah that the Muslims had been enabled to study English in their own way. The *Friend of India* concluded that the order virtually gave a monopoly to the Hindus of Calcutta (who were constantly referred to by the *Friend of India* intentionally or otherwise as the Bengalis) and naturally had its defenders.

The above contention appears to be somewhat one-sided when it is recollected that the change from Persian to English was not all that sudden. The Secretary to the Bengal Government in the Persian Department, in a letter dated 26 June, 1829, to the Committee of Public Instruction, announced that it was the intention of the Government to introduce the English language gradually and eventually to make it the language of public business.⁷³ Six years later, by the Government Resolution dated 7 March, 1835, all the funds for the diffusion of education were diverted to the encouragement of English education. As against this order there was a petition of protest signed by the Muslims of Calcutta, testifying to the fact that the Muslims were neither in the dark nor were their eyes shut to the changes introduced. From the first aforesaid announcement in 1829 to the Resolution of 10 October, 1844, fifteen years had elapsed before knowledge

of English replaced that of Persian as the requisite qualification for Government employees. Meanwhile, from an even earlier date the Government sought to introduce English education in the Calcutta Madrassah (the first attempt made was in 1826), but unfortunately the experiment ended in a failure. Even accepting the view of the *Friend of India* that the Muslims got their first opportunity to study English in their own way with the opening of the Anglo-Persian Department in 1854, it remains to be explained why even after the passage of nearly thirty years it was felt necessary by a leading Muslim organization of Calcutta to address a memorial to the Government of India, praying for a more equitable distribution of state patronage in favour of the Muslims by the adoption of some special measures.

In trying to ascertain the causes for the steadily decreasing Muslim representation in the services, the blame is either wholly placed on the Government for its deliberate one-sided policies, or on the Hindus who were held guilty on charges of nepotism and corruption for shutting out the Muslims from Government employ. The Muslims have also been blamed for their stubborn refusal on religious grounds to participate in the Government system of education which turned out to be the root cause of all their subsequent sufferings. Though there is some truth in each of these charges, yet there were other more subtle, but no less compelling factors which have to be taken into consideration. Though as a result of the Permanent Settlement, many old *zamindaris* passed into the hands of the Hindu *banias*, bankers, merchants and subordinate revenue collectors, the fact cannot be overlooked that till the Settlement, most of the *zamindars* of Bengal were already Hindus, as most of the *reis* of Bihar were Muslims. This state of affairs continued to operate long after the Permanent Settlement.⁷⁴ C. J. Lyall, the officiating Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam in his Note of 24 September, 1882, pointed out that the *Diwani* or Revenue and Civil Administration from the days of Todar Mall downwards (and from before him too) was monopolized by the Hindus. If the treaties, engagements, and *sanads* on which the East India Company's tenure of Bengal rests, are scrutinized, it will be seen that they bear the attestations almost

exclusively of Hindu officials.⁷⁵ The same was true of the early history of Bengal prior to the advent of the British. Murshid Quli employed 'none but Bengali Hindus in the collection of revenue'. 'Private favour ran in the channel of Brahmin interest' (J. Grant). Bengali Hindus were appointed not only to the highest civil posts under Murshid Quli and his successors. 'They were appointed even as police and army officers.... The association of Bengali Hindus in the work of administration was not a British innovation. It was the Murshid Quli tradition'.⁷⁶ Hence an undue influx of Hindus in the revenue and civil departments and a corresponding decrease of the Muslims therein were not wholly the results of British rule. Moreover so far as Bengal Proper is concerned, the Muslims who made up the millions in Eastern Bengal were mostly (except in Chittagong) local converts and belonged to the cultivating classes. In a memorandum before the Education Commission, Abdul Latif pointed out that the mass of the Muhammadan population consisted of cultivators 'among some millions of Brahmins and Kayasthas, who from time immemorial have enjoyed a superior system of education and in consequence a passport to public offices'.⁷⁷ If a classification of the population could be made on the basis of social grades, it would perhaps have been found that the proportion of the Muhammadans of the lettered classes represented in Government employment was by no means as inadequate as it appears at first sight when compared to the large aggregates which composed the total body of Muhammadans.⁷⁸

In the early seventies of the nineteenth century the number of Muhammadans in executive and judicial services began to decrease steadily, partly from deaths and retirements but principally because the Government decided to reject those who did not know English. The result was noticed not only in the Government services but also in all matters connected with Government establishments. The Hindus occupied the field of employment with all but the total exclusion of the Muslim element. 'In 1867 Muslims held 11.7 per cent of Government jobs in Bengal staffed by Indians; twenty years latter they had less than 7 per cent. In 1871 they had about 12 per cent of the gazetted appointments.'⁷⁹ The discussions

with regard to Muhammadan education and Mayo's Resolution of 7 August 1871, drew the attention of official opinion on the subject. The general tenor of a change in official feeling can be traced to certain early expressions on the subject regarding the policy to be adopted. In the opinion of P. S. Melville, it was desirable for the conduct of the administrative machinery as on considerations of justice, that a certain proportion of appointments in the Government service should be held by Muhammadans and that all those appointments should not be filled by Hindus or other cognate classes. This principle being admitted, the Government would act wisely and justly in assigning in each district a certain proportion of echolarships to the Muhammadans (for, it were the schools which turned out the men who afterwards got Government employment), and at the same time in declaring that in the civil administration generally the same proportion should be observed in appointing to offices.⁸⁰ In replying to an Address presented by the Mahomedans Literary Society on 2 May 1877, the Lieutenant-Governor Ashley Eden remarked that 'the propriety of giving to Mahomedans a fair share of the appointments to the service of Government has for many years past been recognized by successive Governments and is certainly recognized by me'.⁸¹ On his return from a vacation in England, Ameer Ali assumed charge of the office of the Presidency Magistrate, a post which had been kept vacant for sometime past by Ashley Eden in the hope that the former would accept it.⁸² Strangely enough, this example was cited by the Secretary of the Mahomedan Literary Society, Abdul Latif, in the above-mentioned address as a proof of 'the wise and impartial policy' followed by the Lieutenant-Governor.⁸³ Though admitting that the system of nomination adopted by the Government for the benefit of Muslims had proved more successful than competition, inasmuch as they affected the service itself, yet the Muslims continued to harp on the complaint that 'the difference of circumstances in the two communities resulted in the employment of a much larger number of Hindus than Muhammadans'.⁸⁴ In their view, 'the system of nomination fell far short of expected results, as the Hindus received much more than their proportionate share'.⁸⁵ But for the period from 1867 to 1871, as is evident

from the return showing the number of appointments under the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal of not less than Rs 150 per mensem to which the Hindus and the Muslims were nominated, Hindus fell by 36 per cent and Muslim nominations fell by 31 per cent. Thus the droppage for the Hindus was relatively more than that of the Muslims.⁸⁶ But what the Muslims failed to realize, or even if they did, refused to admit, was the practical difficulty of giving them a fair share of the appointments in view of their educational backwardness—a fact which was again and again reiterated in official circles, and a difficulty which continued to exist and could be removed only by the Muhammadans themselves.

As early as 1867 when there were two vacancies in the Bengal Council (one being filled by Peary Chand Mitra), the Lieutenant-Governor Sir William Grey wanted the other to be filled by an English-speaking Muhammadan gentleman, but he pointed out in his letter to the Viceroy dated 30 December 1867, that such men were 'extremely rare.'⁸⁷ Ashley Eden, in his reply to the Address mentioned earlier, stated clearly that the difficulty was the deficient supply of young Muhammadan gentlemen who had taken the trouble to thoroughly qualify themselves for the higher branches of the service of Government.⁸⁸ The leaders of the Muhammadan community repeatedly asserted that throughout the period 1867-1912 the Hindus were monopolizing most of the important posts. 'They never looked at the reality of the situation under which more than 80 per cent of the superior posts were being held by the Europeans.'⁸⁹ The Muslims as well as the Hindus were shut out from most of the posts carrying a salary of Rs 500 and above per month. Despite their educational backwardness, if the Muslims felt frustrated for their inadequate representation in the services what they failed to perceive was that the educated Hindus were even more septical as the appointments which they received were but a poor pittance, hardly commensurate with their qualifications. The Bengali middle-class, shut out from industry and trade, had to seek 'economic salvation in the Government offices, in a few mercantile firms and in the Bar'. Such 'salvation' was, however, not at all easy to find. 'It is melancholy,' wrote Richard Temple, 'to see men who once appeared to receive Honours

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Return showing the number of appointments under the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal not less than Rs 150 per mensem to which natives of India were nominated in each of the years from 1867 to 1871.

Years	Miscellaneous			Sub-Ex-Service (Dy. Magistrates Sub-Registrars, Assessors & Extra, Asstt. Commissioner			Sub-Judl. Service		Police		Medical		Total	Remarks
	Officer	Hindus	Muhammadans	Hindus	Muhammadans	Hindus	Muhammadans	Hindus	Muhammadans	Hindus	Muhammadans			
1867		47	3	73	12	9	1	Nil	Nil	8	Nil	137	16	Muhammadans
1868		42	4	59	5	13	1	4	2	7	1	125	13	Hindus
1869		58	3	91	10	32	3	Nil	Nil	9	1	190	17	
1870		32	4	48	6	34	5	"	"	3	Nil	117	15	
1871		28	Nil	24	6	25	4	"	"	11	1	88	11	

Registrar Financial Department

in the University Convocation, now applying for some lowly paid appointment, almost begging from office to office, from department to department, or struggling for the practice of a petty practitioner and after all these returning baffled and disappointed to a poverty-stricken home.' If this was the condition of 'men who once appeared to receive Honours in the University Convocation', 'the difficulties of men with inferior academic qualifications may be easily imagined. Unfortunately the official reaction to this growing distress was not always based on understanding and sympathy. For example we read in Lytton's Convocation Address for 1877: 'It seems to be virtually assumed...that the be-all and the end-all of an educated middle class is Government employment...' And in James Johnston's *Our Educational Policy in India*, published in 1880, we read: 'The present system is raising up a number of discontented and disloyal subjects.'⁹⁰ Another interesting feature in this connection, pointed out by no less an authority than the Lieutenant-Governor himself, was the fact, that not only did the Muhammadans of Bihar have a much larger share of employment than their co-religionists in other parts of the Lower Provinces, but that 'the literate Hindu classes of Bihar, Kayets and others were more than the Muhammadans shut out from employment'. In fact, they were almost excluded from the higher grades of the Government services. These Hindustanis who had learnt Persian during the Mughal rule continued the practice even during the British period and as a result they were either left out of service or had to seek employment in the North-Western Provinces.'⁹¹

All these factors notwithstanding, the subject of Muhammadan appointments and its glaring discrepancies in comparison to the appointment of the Hindus in particular, were perhaps for the first time taken up in a comprehensive manner by one amongst them in 1882. On 6 February of the same year, Syed Ameer Ali, through his National Mahomedan Association, addressed a memorial to the Government of India pointing out that though the Muhammadans formed one-third of the population of the Lower Provinces and in the eastern districts they even outnumbered the Hindus, yet there was an alarming disproportion in the official preferment bestowed upon the Hindus and Muhammadans roughly during the period bet-

ween 1870 and 1880. The Muhammadans felt particularly aggrieved for 'whilst several Hindu Judges have been appointed in Madras, in Bombay, and in Calcutta, no Mussulman has been fortunate enough to obtain a seat on the Bench of the superior tribunals'.⁹² Eight years later, Ameer Ali was the second Muhammadan to be elevated to the Bench. The numerical inferiority of the Muhammadans in the Subordinate Judicial Service was, in the opinion of the memorialists, due to the stringent requirement that no one should be appointed a Munsiff except a Bachelor of Law of Calcutta University, a condition which proved seriously detrimental to Muhammadan interests. As a remedial measure, it was suggested that separate examinations be instituted for appointments to the Subordinate Judicial Service without the candidates being required to submit to the preliminary condition of passing the B. A. Examination of the Calcutta University. In para 18 of the memorial it was further pointed out that the vested interests of those who were already in the enjoyment of power and influence often succeeded by legitimate and sometimes illegitimate means to keep from the notice of the Departmental Heads, the claims of the Muhammadans candidates, which were also often treated with contempt or indifference. However, the memorialists judiciously pointed out that they did not intend by these remarks to make any reflection upon the Hindu community, but desired simply to call attention to a fact which, to a large extent, paralyzed the action of the Government.⁹³ The memorial also contained a protest against the introduction of competitive examinations for the uncovenanted services and simultaneous examination for the covenanted service. In the North-Western Provinces and Oudh no appointments were made on the basis of the results of competitive examinations and in these provinces the Muhammadans were more successful in obtaining Government employment, compared to their co-religionists in Bengal and the Punjab. The memorial from the National Mahomedan Association had special reference to Bengal where alone, compared to the other provinces of upper India, were the Muhammadans in office disproportionately few. It was dealt with in as careful and complete a way as was possible by the Lieutenant-Governor Sir Rivers

Thompson. Although the memorialists were aware that orders from time to time had been issued by the Government of India as well as by the Local Government, directing the heads of Administrative departments to pay due regard to the claims of the Muhammadan candidates, they asserted that no 'practical gain' had accrued to the Muhammadans from these orders. This they attributed to two causes, i.e., (a) scant respect shown to the Government policy by the officers with whom the actual distribution and dispensation of State patronage rested, and (b) the undue importance which was attached by the latter to a university qualification. The memorial of the National Mahomedan Association laid special stress upon the extent to which the Hindus had ousted the Muhammadans from State employ generally, and prayed that the balance of State patronage may be redressed. Ameer Ali's programme was based squarely upon the demand for preferential treatment. As it had been already argued and established by men like Hunter that the Government was largely to be blamed for the 'decadence and ruin' of the Muslim community, the state was therefore called upon to redress this inequality of State patronage. The political importance of the Muslim community and its size as the largest minority in India were important arguments for giving them a definite share of patronage. One of the cardinal demands of the Muslim leaders of the period was, therefore, a reservation of a proportion of jobs for their co-religionists.

The views of the Government of India with reference to the memorial of 1882 were summed up in the Resolution of 15 July 1885 with regard to the points raised by the National Mahomedan Association. The Government of India remarked that admission to the superior departments of Government service was generally speaking regulated either by public competition or by the possession of qualifications, altogether independent of the race or caste of the candidate. The blame, therefore, for a lesser representation of the Muhammadans in the public services could not be attributed to the action of the State or of its officers. As a matter of fact, in the Statutory Civil Service, the Muhammadans 'had even more than their proportionate share of consideration, 10 out of 36 nominations to that service having been given to Mussal-

mans.⁹⁴ In Bengal to which the memorial more particularly referred, there was no doubt that the numerical inferiority of the Muhammadans in the public offices was very marked in comparison to their forming over 31 per cent of the total population. But the result was mainly due to their want of the prescribed educational qualifications—a product of poverty and also of a genuine unwillingness on their part to take advantage of the education provided by the State. The Governor-General in Council did not consider it desirable or for the advantage of the Muhammadans themselves that they should be exempted from the general tests of admission to the Government services. Nor could special favour be shown them in open competitive examinations of any description. It was only by raising their own educational qualifications that the Muhammadans could hope to win appointments that were awarded as the result of examination. But there were a large number of appointments the gift of which lay in the hands of the local Governments, the High Courts and the local officers. The Governor-General in Council desired that in those provinces where the Muhammadans did not receive their full share of State employment, the Local Governments and High Courts would endeavour to redress the inequality as opportunity offered, and would impress upon subordinate officers the importance of adhering to this principle in their selection of candidates. The above orders which were contained in para 22 of the Resolution were regarded by the National Mahomedan Association as the charter of Muslim emancipation from the thralldom of their fellow-subjects. The Resolution as a whole fell short of the expectations of the Central National Mahomedan Association, but at least it conceded that in some parts of the country Muslims needed Government help and ought to have it.

On this point the Bengal Government took action in its Resolution dated 8 October 1886, in which it was stated that information called for by the local Government 'sufficiently indicated that in several branches of the public service, and in many districts, Muhammadans do not receive employment in proportion either to their numbers or to their qualifications.'⁹⁵ This result was ascribed to the predilection of the Muhammadans for Persian and Arabic learning, which however

was daily becoming less marked. The Bengal Government called attention to the orders of the Government of India (Resolution of 15 July 1885) and directed that suitable candidates should be obtained by controlling officers for offices in which there were no Muhammadans. In view of the above resolution, the *Statesman* 15 October 1886, remarked that besides the efficiency of the public service which was always the first thing to be regarded, it was necessary also to attend to the due distribution of places of emolument, 'so as to prevent the depression of a numerous and influential class, and secure their co-operation for the general benefit of the administration'.⁹⁶

On 6 July 1888, the Central National Mahomedan Association submitted another memorial to the Earl of Dufferin to point out the difficulties under which the Muhammadan community laboured 'in obtaining a just recognition of their claims to a proper share of the state patronage'. The prayer of the memorialists was that despite the orders issued in the Resolution of 1885 and the subsidiary orders of the Bengal Government issued with the object of improving the position of the Muhammadans in the Public services, and in spite of the fact that English education had made decided progress within recent years among the Muhammadans, the statistics furnished from the different districts of Bengal and other provinces showed an appreciable retrogression instead of improvement. The veracity of the statistical evidence to prove Muhammadan retrogression in appointments during the period under consideration, however, failed to bear scrutiny. The Lieutenant-Governor remarked that it would be a matter of very great concern to him to find that any such retrogression had taken place. But the general result as referred to by the memorialists was in the opinion of the Lieutenant-Governor at variance with the statistics on the subject submitted by the Commissioners in ordinary course, in their annual administration reports. The information which was received from six divisions enabled a comparison to be instituted of the number of Muhammadan officers in superior service during the two years 1886-87 and 1887-88, and the result of this comparison is shown in the statement attached. The figures indicated that everywhere, except in Burdwan there is a 'satisfactory

increase'.⁹⁷ From the Presidency Division no statistics were furnished, but it was stated 'that the number of Mahomedans in superior service was greater than in the previous year.'⁹⁸ The Lieutenant-Governor was inclined *prima-facie* to accept the indications offered by the Commissioners' figures, that 'there has been a substantial improvement in the encouragement now given to the employment of Mahomedans in Government offices, and that orders of Government have generally received due attention...' He was also prepared to give 'further consideration to the matter' if the Association could show that it was not the case in regard to particular districts or departments.⁹⁹ But, as regards the general policy of the Government, it was, by its own admission, above 'doubt or error'.

Lord Dufferin, who was a 'sympathizing well-wisher' of the Muhammadan community and also the architect of the Resolution of 1885, remarked in his reply to an address from the Central National Mahomedan Association on 24 March 1888, that it was the duty of English rulers to see that each denomination obtained a fair start, and that the conditions upon which they entered the contests of life were equalized and fairly adjusted. The Muhammadans of India consequently could rest assured that the Government would always view with utmost sympathy and approval their endeavours to remove the peculiar impediments which hampered their efforts, especially when those impediments resulted from a conscientious adherence to the behests of their religion.¹⁰⁰ What the Government could do, it did, in the opinion of the Viceroy, by issuing the Resolution of 15 July 1885. That Resolution 'undoubtedly fell short of the expectations of the Muhammadan community.' But, as time went on, 'it was found to be of a more beneficial and effective character' and the Viceroy, by this 'bare act of justice' sought to give satisfactory proof of his 'deep and warm solicitude' for the Muhammadans.¹⁰¹ In return, wrote the Viceroy to the Secretary of State Lord Cross on 17 September 1888, that 'the Mahomedans also have certainly been brought much more into sympathy with the Government than they were before'.¹⁰² However, the Resolution of July 1885 did not solve the problem of Muhammadan appointments once and for all. On the contrary, after the foundation of the Congress, the

question assumed a political complexion when the necessity of making special provision for a fair distribution of the appointments between the Muhammadans and the Hindus was undertaken as an act of policy to prevent 'weak but clever races like the Bengalis from obtaining an undue share of the offices'.¹⁰³ The Bengal is also happened to be the chief agitators in the Congress movement. An anti-Bengali-Babu feeling became a common subject of the private correspondence of top civilians of the time. In his letter to Cross (Secretary of State) dated 8 March 1887, Dufferin wrote that 'a Bengalee political atmosphere was by no means a wholesome one for the Government to breathe except for a restricted period. It was artificial, irritating, and misleading, and intercepted a view of the rest of India; that there were a great number of other sections of the population between whom and the rulers it was even more important to establish a sympathetic feeling.' The Viceroy felt that the Government offices were overladen with 'an undesirable surplussage of Bengalee clerks' who in spite of their efficiency, ought not to be allowed 'a monopoly of Government employment'.¹⁰⁴

In 1886 a Public Services Commission was appointed to review the whole question of employment. In his evidence before the Public Service Commission, Abdul Latif pointed out that as long as 'the Government recognized the desirability of giving a fair share of public employment to the Mahommedans, no exclusive system of competition for recruitment' was possible as the 'Mahommedans will have no chance of getting a fair share of the appointments', in an open competition in India. It would be impossible 'for the Muslims for many years to come, to compete on equal terms with the Hindus who have taken to English education for the last fifty years'.¹⁰⁵ If simultaneous examinations were introduced in India, Ameer Ali's view was that the 'Universities which have become a huge machine for manufacturing B.A.s and M.A.s will turn out Civil Service candidates by hundreds, and the whole country would be swamped with men clamouring for Government employ'. And the Muhammadans 'would absolutely be precluded from having a chance of entering the Civil Service'.¹⁰⁶ With regard to the altered position of the Muhammadans in the judicial and executive appointments, Ali remarked: 'Twenty

years ago the proportion (of the Muslims) in the Judicial service was about one-third, and in the Executive Service a little less than one-third. But by 1887 the position of his co-religionists in the Subordinate Judicial Service was one-twenty-seventh and in the Subordinate Executive Service was one-tenth'. In 1886-87 there were only fifty-three Muslims to five hundred and twenty-two Hindu officers in the uncovenanted judicial and executive service of Bengal.¹⁰⁷ Compared to the other provinces of India, the variation between the two proportions was 'most marked in the Lower Provinces of Bengal and in Assam'.¹⁰⁸ 'The story told by these figures carries with it a moral which Government ought to lay at heart', remarked Ameer Ali. But he added that decidedly the Government was endeavouring to remedy the situation to some extent. And it was therefore that the Muslim community was against any changes regarding the rules of recruitment 'which will have the effect of introducing an unqualified competitive system'.¹⁰⁹ Thus it was the employment question which ultimately provoked the Muslim leaders. When the Indian National Congress was founded in 1885, educated Hindus had already set out their demands for simultaneous examination for covenanted, and open competitive examination for uncovenanted services. Both these demands could only handicap the position of the Bengali Muslims even further. They therefore decided to steer clear of the Congress.

It has been found necessary to some extent to go into a detailed discussion of Muhammadan education and appointment as forming an essential background to their simultaneous and subsequent political developments. The separatist line of thought and action which originated in the working out of a scheme of educational reforms and of proper representation of the Muhammadans in public services was gradually projected into the sphere of politics. It has been aptly remarked by Ram Gopal that Government jobs during the post-Mutiny period formed the first dividing line between the Hindus and the Muslims. They were the starting point of a separatist movement which grew in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in the north-west of India under the patronage of Sir Syed's Aligarh school and in the eastern provinces under the leadership of Ameer Ali's Central National

Mahomedan Association.¹¹⁰ The insistence upon open competitive examination as the only mode of selection for State employment meant the absolute exclusion of the muhammadans from the public services. This explains why for many years the only function of the Central National Mahomedan Association and its branches was to represent to official dignitaries that Government posts ought to be filled up by a system of nomination which suited the Muslims and not by competitive tests which suited the Hindus. Moreover the Hindu-Muslim leaders were also engaged in a long and laborious controversy regarding changes in the rules governing entrance to the Indian Civil Service and on questions of holding simultaneous examinations in India and in England. One of the most important reasons why the Muslims held aloof from the Indian Association and the Indian National Congress was their fear of the domination of the Bengali Hindus in the Indian Civil Service. In view of this it will be seen later, that the agitation for representative institutions without sufficient guarantees for the representation of the minority community, appeared to the Muslims as swamping of the minority by the majority. An interesting point to be taken into consideration is that this separatist line of action originated from the Bengali Muslims. It was neither in the Punjab, nor in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh where the Muslims held their own as compared to the other communities, that the Government had to take special action for their benefit. But in Bengal, Muslim 'depression' became even more galling in the face of a tough competition with the educated Hindus. The adoption of special measures was therefore felt to be a vital necessity by the Government as well as by the Muslim leaders. But 'it is doubtful', said S. R. Mehrotra, 'whether the Government's new educational dispensation for Muslims encouraged them to take to higher western education in any marked degree. What it did do was to cut them off from the mainstream of secular education in India and to strengthen their sense of separatism'.¹¹¹ Separate schools, separate teaching and inspecting staff, separate scholarships embodied in the Government's educational policy for the Muslims during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, alienated the Muslim intelligentsia from

the English-educated Indians of the other communities. By making the Muslims the objects of its special attention in matters of education and civil employment the British Government in India taught the backward minority community always to look up to it for the redress of their 'grievances and claims'. By constantly contrasting the Muslims with the Hindus, especially as regards their respective shares in Government service and personal qualities, and occasionally discriminating in favour of the former, the local Governments and the Anglo-Indian press fostered much ill-will between the two communities. On the one hand, Muslim political opinion of the time was influenced by the consideration that a fair equilibrium could be expected to be maintained from the political wisdom of a neutral Government than from the generous instincts of a majority looking primarily but naturally to their own interests. On the other hand, the advanced majority community, i.e., the Hindus, more or less indifferent in the beginning to Muslim retrogression in education and service, gradually began to show signs of sullen resentment against the Government's favourite-community treatment. In the ultimate analysis, the controversy over education and Government jobs represented a clash of vested interests of particular sections of both the Hindu and Muslim communities. It was but natural that the politics of Bengal as of the country as a whole, from the inception of the Indian National Congress in 1885 to the foundation of the All India Muslim League in 1906, which was shaped and influenced by these sectional interests, assumed a separatist character.

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¹⁰ Rev. J. Long, 'Social Condition of the Muhammadans of Bengal', *Transactions of the Social Science Association*, vol. III, part I, 1869, p. 14, quoted in Amalendu De, *Roots of Separatism in Nineteenth Century Bengal* (Calcutta, 1974), p. 15.

¹¹ Quoted in *Home Edu. B. March 1888 No. 2*.

¹² S. R. Mehrotra, *The Emergence of the Indian National Congress* (Delhi, 1971), p. 244.

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¹⁴ A. F. Salahuddin Ahmed, *Essays*, op. cit., p. 634.

¹⁵ Mehrotra, op. cit. p. 254.

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²⁰ *Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1872-73* p. 452.

²¹ *Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1871-72*, p. 255.

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²³ *Ibid.*, also *Abstract of the Progs. of the Mohamedan Literary Society*, 9 June 1900, quoted from the Government of Bengal letter No. 2918, dated 11 August 1872, to the Government of India.

²⁴ *Home Edu. B. March 1888, No. 2*, Sub. Nawab Abdool Luteef's account of Mohomedan Education in Bengal.

²⁵ *Ibid.* Underlined in original.

²⁶ *Home Edu. A. September 1874, No. 2-3*, p. 352, paras 6 and 7.

²⁷ *Northbrook Collection, Reel 5*, Letter from Lord Hobart to Lord Northbrook dated 1 June 1872, Madras.

²⁸ *Northbrook Collection, Reel 4*, Letter from The Duke of Argyll to Northbrook, dated 23 October 1872.

²⁹ *Home Edu. A. October 1873, No. 27-28.*

³⁰ *Hindoo Patriot*, 24 January 1876.

³¹ Quoted in *ibid.*

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³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ P. Hardy, *op. cit.* p. 115.

³⁵ 'Memoirs of the Late Rt. Hon'ble Syed Ameer Ali', in *Islamic Culture*, October 1931, p. 517.

³⁶ *Islamic Culture*, January 1932, p. 2.

³⁷ S. Khuda Bukhsh, 'Late Rt. Hon. Syed Ameer Ali', in *Muslim Review*, vol. 3, 1928-29, July-September.

³⁸ P. Hardy, *op. cit.* p. 107.

³⁹ Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 310-11.

⁴⁰ Scholars are divided in their opinion regarding the actual date of the foundation of the National Mahomedan Association at Calcutta. For the different views advanced see Amalendu De, *op. cit.* p. 91. Professor De mentions 1877 as the date of foundation on the basis of a letter of Ameer Ali dated 15 March 1927, published in the *Forward*. A more conclusive evidence is however furnished by the *Octennial Report of the Central National Mahomedan Association for 2917-24* which categorically mentions the year 1877 as the date on which the above Association was established and thereby leaves no room for doubt. In the light of the above evidence, it appears strange that the year 1878 still finds favour as the year of the foundation of the said organization in some latest publications, viz., (a) Rafiuddin Ahmed, *op. cit.* p. 36; (b) Nemai Sadhan Bose, *Racism, Struggle for Equality and Indian Nationalism* (Calcutta, 1981), p. 221.

⁴¹ *Octennial Report For 1917-1924 of the Central National Mahomedan Association*, p. 3.

⁴² *Home Edu. Progs. A. March 1882, No. 37-41*: Memorial from the National Mahomedan Association to the Marquis of Ripon dated 6 February 1882.

⁴³ *Ibid.* para 16.

⁴⁴ *Home Edu. Progs. A. March 1882 No. 37-41*, para 23.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Sufia Ahmed, *op. cit.* p. 18: from A Luteef, *On the present condition of the Indian Mohamedans and the best means for its improvement*, 1883.

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⁴⁸ *Home Edu. Progs. A. March 1882 Nos. 37-41*, regarding Muham-madan Education.

⁴⁹ *Home Edu. A. July 1885, Nos. 51-98.*

⁵⁰ *Education Commission. Progs. Report by the Bengal Provincial*

Committee : evidence of Maulavi Syed Amir Hossain, Khan Bahadur, p. 229.

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⁵² *Home Deptt. Edu. A*, July, 1885, No. 51-98, p. 16.

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⁵⁴ Ibid.

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⁵⁸ S. Ahmed, op. cit. pp. 22-23.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 24.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Quoted in ibid. p. 52.

⁶³ *Triennial Report of the Central National Mahomedan Association*, (Calcutta, 1888), p. 14.

⁶⁴ *Progs. of the Education Commission, Report by the Bengal Provincial Committee* : evidence of The Hon. Ameer Ali, Barrister at Law.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 222.

⁶⁶ A. F. Salahuddin Ahmed, *Essays*, p. 647, quoted from Badruddin Umar, *Sanskritir Sankat* (Dacca, 1967), p. 57.

⁶⁷ *The M.A.O. College Magazine*, 15 January 1900, quoted in *Abstract of Progs. of the Mahomedan Literary Society*, 9 June 1900, p. 26.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 28.

⁶⁹ *Home Edu. Feb. 1890*, No. 34-61, Memorandum No. II of the Central National Mahomedan Association, p. 122.

⁷⁰ *Abstract of the Progs. of the Mahomedan Literary Society 1900*, p. 6.

⁷¹ Ibid. p. 9.

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⁷³ B. B. Majumdar, *Indian Political Association and Reform of Legislature (1818-1917)* (Calcutta, 1965), p. 219.

⁷⁴ A. F. Salahuddin Ahmed, *Essay*, p. 634.

⁷⁵ *Home Edu. A*, July 1885, Nos. 51-98, Note by the Secretary, p. 207.

⁷⁶ N. K. Sinha (ed.), *The History of Bengal (1757-1905)* (University of Calcutta, 1967), pp. 13-14.

⁷⁷ *Home Edu. February, 1890*, No. 34-61.

⁷⁸ *Home Edu. A*, July 1885, Nos. 51-78, p. 207.

⁷⁹ Anil Seal, op. cit. p. 302.

⁸⁰ *Home Edu.* June 1873, Nos. 74-111A.

⁸¹ *Home Edu. B.* August, 1877 No. 7, dated 2 May 1877, para 3.

⁸² *Islamic Culture*, 1931, vol. 5, p. 6.

⁸³ *Home Edu. B.* 1877, p. 1.

⁸⁴ *The Muhammadan Observer*, 1 March 1894 : 'Nomination V. Competition'.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ *Home Establishment October 1874*, No. 7, The Table of Return is attached herewith. Please see p. 281.

⁸⁷ *Lawrence Collection Reel 7* : letter from W. Grey to Lawrence, dated 30 December 1867.

⁸⁸ *Home Edu. B.* 1877, dated 2 May 1877, para 3.

⁸⁹ B. B. Majumdar, op. cit. p. 220.

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⁹² *Home Edu. Prog. A.* March 1882, No. 37-41, para 26.

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⁹⁴ *Home Edu.* February 1890, No. 34-61, p. 6, para 20.

⁹⁵ Extract from *Progs. B.* November 1886, quoted in *Home Edu. A.* October 1888, No. 1-11.

⁹⁶ *The Statesman and Friend of India*, 15 October 1886.

⁹⁷ *Home Edu. A.* October 1888, No. 1-11, p. 20.

Name of Division	No. of Muhammadan officers in superior service during 1886-87	No. of Muhammadan officers in superior service during 1887-88	Increase	Decrease
Burdwan	425	388	—	37
Dacca	558	644	86	—
Rajshahe	654	684	30	—
Chittagong	161	174	13	—
Bhagulpure	504	1,634	1,130*	—
Chato Nagpore	220	419	199	—

* The Lieutenant-Governor pointed out that there was obviously a mistake in the Report of the Commissioner of Bhagulpur division, due possibly to an error in classification, as it was hardly possible that the increase in the number of employees could have been as large as the figures indicated.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ *Cross Papers*, Reel 5, Extract from reply to address from the Central National Mahomedan Association 24 March 1888.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. Extract from reply to address from Mahomedan Societies of Lucknow 10 April 1888.

¹⁰² Ibid. Private correspondence between Cross and Dufferin.

¹⁰³ *Lansdowne Papers*, Reel No. 3: from the Secretary of State the Earl of Kimberley to Lord Lansdowne 9 June 1893.

¹⁰⁴ *Cross Papers*: letter from Dufferin to Cross, dated 8 March 1887.

¹⁰⁵ *Progs. of the Public Service Commission*, vol. VI (Calcutta, 1887): evidence of Abdul Latif (1 March 1887), pp. 267-68.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. Evidence of Syed Ameer Ali (26 February 1887), p. 196.

¹⁰⁷ *Report of The Public Service Commission*, vol. I, 1886-87 (Calcutta, 1888), p. 36, vide Appendix E.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 39.

¹⁰⁹ *Progs. of The Public Service Commission*, vol. VI, p. 201.

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Separatism and 'Real Politik'

(1885-1892)

It is indeed a curiosity of history that from the very beginning, the Hindu reformist and Muslim revivalist movements in Bengal ran at cross purposes. The second quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed for the Hindus the syncretist Brahma movement. Under the leadership of Raja Rammohan Roy followed by Debendranath Tagore and Keshab Chandra Sen, the movement deriving its inspiration from western progressive and liberal tendencies, remained largely confined to a small urban intellectual élite. It was about the same time that a vast cross-section of the Muslims, concentrated mainly in rural Bengal, were in the grip of puritanical and revivalist doctrines. In the sixties however, there was a swing in the balance, with the Hindus leaning more towards revivalism and the Muslims more towards modernism. The modernism of the latter, however, did not develop wholly along secular lines, though it was certainly minus its overt emphasis on Islam which was the characteristic of the preceding decades. The above dichotomy was essentially the result of the Hindus being attitude-wise more progressive and educationally more advanced than the Muslims by western standards. Consequently in the gradual evolution of constitutional agitation in Bengal, the Muslims could not and did not participate. The nationalist movement in its early stages dominated by the educated Bengal intelligentsia was, strictly speaking, intellectual and secular in character based on the western model. As Abdul Hamid remarked, 'The Indian political movement when it began, was decidedly outlandish. The principal sources of patriotic inspiration were furnished by English literature, European and American history and

their accounts of struggles for freedom.¹ The Islamic religious-political concept was too ingrained in the Muslim mind, and an innate conservative refusal to appreciate the virtues of western ideals too steadfast, to enable them to participate in the progressive movements of the period. But the catastrophe of 1857 brought about significant changes. A retrospective analysis of their deplorable plight convinced a section of the Muslims under 'westernizing' influences in the post-Mutiny period, of the mistaken impulse of an overt religious consciousness that had resulted in debilitating influences.

In the sixties of the nineteenth century, under the leadership of a limited circle of right-thinking Muslims, their co-religionists were set on the path of educational uplift and an unswerving loyalty to the British Government. It was about the same time that the reformist movement started by Rammohan Roy was becoming more broad-based and widespread in character. A significant feature of this reformist movement was a certain disregard for the past and a spirit of revolt against the time-honoured and traditional beliefs of the country. There was bound to be, in course of time, a reaction, or at least a corrective to the denationalizing tendencies engendered by the reformist movement.² Rainarain Bose, himself an alumnus of the Hindu College, a product of English education, and a member of the Brahma Samaj, was the pioneer of this reaction. In 1861 he founded a society for the promotion of national feeling among the Bengalis. In a lecture delivered in 1872 he boldly proclaimed the superiority of Hindu religion and culture to European and Christian theology and civilization. 'There was no doubt that he deliberately proceeded to found nationalism on the basis of Hindu religion, as he conceived it.'³ In fact, as early as October 1839, the liberal Hindus of Calcutta under the leadership of Debendranath Tagore had founded the Tattvabodhini Sabha to propagate an ancient, dignified and intellectual form of Hinduism. It succeeded in reviving the shaken spirit of the English-educated Bengalis and diverted their attention from a blind imitation and adoration of the west to the great values of ancient Hindu culture. While it made use of the new learning from the west to reform Hinduism, it remained firmly anchored to its native moorings. But while the preachings of the Tattva-

bodhini Sabha appealed to the intellectual élite, those of Rajnarain Bose and his disciple Nabagopal Mitra assumed a more emotional character and influenced to a considerable extent, the nationalist agitation of the day. The ideas of Bose were given a concrete shape by Nabagopal Mitra. The publication of the *National Paper* in 1867, the inauguration of an annual gathering in the same year known as 'the Hindu Mela', and the foundation of an association called the National Society, all had as their avowed objects the promotion of unity and national feeling among the Hindus. As the *Mela* was confined to the Hindus, the use of the word 'National' was objected to. As against this, the *National Paper*, the organ of the *Mela*, observed, 'the Hindus (who) certainly form a nation by themselves, and as such a society established by them can very well be called a "National Society".'

'This was not an isolated expression of views, casually formed', remarked Dr. R. C. Majumdar, 'but rested on a deep-rooted conviction which, at first confined to a small section, was gradually imbibed, consciously or unconsciously, by a large majority of educated people'.⁵ Thus, throughout the better part of the sixties nationalism in Bengal was established on the firm foundation of Hinduism which received an added impetus from the Indological studies exhibiting the glory of the ancient Hindus. The idea of Hindu nationalism had an intellectual exponent in Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1894). In his novels and discourses he put Hindu nationalism on a philosophical basis. His novel *Anandamath* is a notable case in point. 'Though Bankim Chandra never openly preached Hindu nationalism as a counterpoise to Muslim nationalism... his writings had an inevitable tendency to foster the former.'⁶ The newly awakened national pride of the Bengali *bhadralok* sought sustenance in ancient Hindu glory and medieval Hindu resistance to Muslim rule, in the stories of Rajput, Sikh and Maratha heroism, portrayed in contemporary Bengali writings. By way of explanation it was argued that as Government officials, like Chatterjee, could hardly attack the British openly, the Muslims were made to serve 'merely as convenient whipping boys'. If true, this explanation only reveals all the more clearly the unconscious but almost universal

bhadralok assumption that the sentiments of Muslim contemporaries were not worthy of serious notice...⁷ It was perhaps natural under the circumstances that the generality of the Muslims, while appreciating Chatterjee's writings, reacted adversely to its contents. '...The writings of Bankim and Bengali writers of his school have helped to draw the hour hand of rapprochement between the Hindus and Muslims fifty years back', remarked the editor of the *Moslem Chronicle*.⁸ Many patriotic poets of Bengal like Rangalal Banerjee, Nabin Chandra Sen, and pre-eminently among them, Rabindranath Tagore, who were never consciously aware of the Hindu influence working on them, lent indirect support to the cause of Hindu nationalism. Outside Bengal, the Arya Samaj in the north-west and the theosophical movement in the south represented a revolt in the seventies against the spirit of heterodoxy and even heresy which the western learning had brought with it. The religio-political Arya Samaj was founded in Bombay in 1875 by Dayananda Saraswati. In his creed modern ideas were made to align themselves with reactionary Hinduism. He emphasized a return to the ancient Vedic faith and directed a counter-attack against the challenge of Christianity and Islam. His battle-cry 'India for the Indians' was charged with momentous political consequences. The last phase of the national renaissance in India prior to the inception of the Congress was identified in Bengal with the resurgence of Hindu revivalism sparked off by the disciples of Ramkrishna Paramhansa. The old Vedantic idealism of the Ramkrishna movement was reconciled with the nationalism of the new age by Ramkrishna's greatest disciple, Vivekananda. Vivekananda dreamt of world conquest by the Hindu race. Many prominent leaders of the period who came under his influence and sought his counsel started preaching an aggressive Hindu nationalism. The composite Hindu-Muslim culture failed to be projected from the political platform. Instead, the exploits of the Sikhs and the Marathas were glorified. The idealization of pre-Muslim India alienated the Muslims from the main currents of political reform. The growth of this Hindu tone was inevitable under the circumstances mentioned earlier, though a broader basis of the national consciousness was, in view of the racial and religious diversities of the country,

certainly much more desirable. 'At the same time, it is only fair to mention that the Muslim writers were similarly imbued with the spirit of Muslim nationalism throughout the nineteenth century, even long after Wahabism had died out.'⁹ Urdu literature, for example, up to the last quarter of the nineteenth century, never ceased to remind the Muslims that they were in India, but not of India, whose soil, according to a great Urdu poet, was *apak* or 'impure'. If the neo-Hinduism of the sixties generated a sense of hatred and indifference towards the Muslims, the new class of English-educated Muslims of whom Syed Ameer Ali was the most distinguished representative, was also not lagging behind in what may be called 'a backward looking intellectual venture'. The Islamic renaissance which Ameer Ali initiated in the intellectual field consisted of a reinterpretation of Islam in accordance with the liberal and rationalistic spirit of the nineteenth century. But in practice 'both nascent Hinduism and nascent Islam of the latter nineteenth century could not get away from the contradictions that lurked within them'. It was indeed unfortunate that the 'Hindu renaissance and Moslem renaissance ran into competing lines'.¹⁰ The difference in the historical outlook of the two major communities of India prevented the growth of a composite Indian nationalism. 'Yet it would be wrong to maintain that broad ideas of nationalism, embracing India as a whole, irrespective of race or creed, were at any time lacking in Bengal.'¹¹ The study of the political development of the Hindus and the Muslims during the last quarter of the nineteenth century against this background forms a fitting prelude to the events culminating in the opening decade of the twentieth century.

In the seventies of the nineteenth century Bengali discontent soared high. 'That most Hindoos distrust and dislike us at present, I have no doubt', wrote Wanchope, to Northbrook in October 1872.¹² A series of repressive measures adopted by Lord Lytton (1876-1880) roused the public from its attitude of indifference and apathy and gave a stimulus to political developments. Sir William Wedderburn remarked that the bureaucracy had not only done their best to prevent new concessions, they had also, when opportunity offered, taken away, the privileges inherited from a former genera-

tion of reformers—the liberty of the press, the right of public meeting, municipal self-government and the independence of the universities.¹³ No Viceroy in the nineteenth century left India 'with fewer marks of regret or honour from the indigenous population than did Lytton in June 1880'. The only Indian public bodies which presented valedictory addresses to Lytton in June 1880 were the Mahomedan Literary Society and the National Mahomedan Association of Calcutta. But their gesture thought not without significance in itself, was probably due to 'official pressure'.¹⁴ Meanwhile a mental fermentation was going on in Bengal, which could best be described as 'an intellectual uprising of the middle classes' who became desperately keen 'to win their way by force of brain and study'. It was this host of educated, yet discontented, men without employ who were 'very captious, always complaining of our rule, very ambitious of rising to high places now occupied by Europeans...and are now becoming actually jealous when they see the loaves and fishes of the country going to Europeans', wrote Richard Temple on 5 May 1875, to Lord Salisbury.¹⁵ In view of the steady growth in university education, the Secretary of State, Salisbury rather belatedly regretted that 'a mistake was made by Lord Macaulay and others in the direction they gave to educational efforts in India'. Preferring the spread of popular education, he pointed out that the University education only manufactured 'a redundant supply of candidates for the liberal professions in a country where the demand is small', and as a by-product, turned out 'a formidable array of seditious article-writers'.¹⁶

The most important factor that the British rulers had therefore to deal with in the political life of Bengal during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, was the growing strength of an educated class which was perfectly loyal and moderate in its views, but which quite justly considered itself entitled to a greater share in the Government of India. It was this middle-class intelligentsia who, inspired by the example of Mazzini, conceived of bringing the whole of India under a common political platform. Soon after his return from England (June 1875) Surendra Nath Banerjea began to contemplate an association on a more democratic basis,

in view of the existing British Indian Association being essentially, and by its creed, an association of landholders. The upshot of all this was the foundation of the Indian Association on 26 July 1876. It soon focussed the public spirit of the middle-class and became 'the centre of the leading representatives of the educated community of Bengal'.¹⁷ In view of these developments India presented a very anomalous situation. An almost autocratic Government, faced an absolutely free press and a constitutional agitation conducted upon scientific principles elaborated by the most advanced democracy in Europe. This was 'the direct, the anticipated and foreseen outcome of the high education', that had been brought within the reach of the people. The Muslims, unhappily for themselves, but from motives not wholly unjustifiable, stood aloof from the colleges and universities, which were the nursery of those honourable and ambitious aspirations. Consequently, the Muslims as a community professed an attitude of political indifference in the modern context, not by accident, but by choice. As a logical sequel, the post-Mutiny period witnessed an all-absorbing effort by the Muslims at emphasizing their points of difference with the Hindus, maintaining their separate identity, and cautiously withdrawing from the general political activism of the period, in a spirit of loyalty towards the Government. In the first half of the nineteenth century the two watchwords 'reform' and 'revivalism' were respectively employed by the Hindus and the Muslims to denote their diverse developments. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century while the educated middle-class comprising mainly the Hindus, was determined to 'agitate', the backward Muslims found it more convenient to 'educate'. This essential difference in attitude and approach was reflected in the gradual politicization of the country.

The Indian Association did not rule out the inclusion of Muslim members, and had as one of its cardinal objects, the promotion of friendly feelings between the two communities.¹⁸ Yet what appeared as a significant pointer to the shape of things to come was the decision of Syed Ameer Ali and a section of the politically conscious Muslims to launch a separate organization a year later, though not excluding the membership of the Hindus from its precincts. So when Ameer Ali

was invited by Banerjea to join the Indian Association, his refusal was logical enough. The educated Muslim middle-class of Bengal at this juncture were in no mood to Collaborate with the Hindus in any political venture. They seemed more inclined to emphasize the existence of a separate Muslim nationality with its own separate interests and aspirations and carve out a separate political career for their co-religionists. In the opinion of Ram Gopal, since the benefits of employment in higher ranks, expected to flow from the Indian Association's agitation, were to go almost exclusively to the Hindus and not to the Muslims, Ameer Ali believed that the Muslims being educationally backward, 'needed a different organization'.¹⁹ In the first place, simultaneous examinations, 'the apple of Surendranath's eye,' could only handicap the Bengali Muslims even further. Moreover, local boards, municipalities and Legislative Councils elected on a franchise of property, wealth and education, would give the Muslims little say in the proceedings. Ripon's local self-government schemes gave point to these fears. Similarly, the Muslim leaders showed no interest in reforming municipal Government at the centre. 'In the Calcutta Corporation they had only five out of forty-eight seats in 1883.'²⁰ The position of the Muslims was well explained by Maulavi Ahmed, a municipal councillor, who told W. C. Blunt that 'as more power was given to the natives the Mahomedan position would get worse and worse', since 'there was hardly a leading man among the Calcutta Mahomedans who had any means apart from his Government pay.' 'In the struggle for existence' they were left behind as 'the weakest community' and 'it was impossible for them to combine with the Hindus who were so selfish, they wanted every post for themselves'.²¹

Prior to the foundation of the National Mahomedan Association by Syed Ameer Ali, the Muslims had no specific political organization of their own. As a result, the Government of India consulted the views of the Mahomedan Literary Society (founded in Calcutta in 1863) on matters affecting the interests of the Muslims. Its founder-member Nawab Abdul Latif was convinced that 'the British Raj was too powerful to be resisted and too useful to be ignored'. Culturally, the Literary Society's movement, with the Nawab as the moving figure,

taught the Muslims to 'get ahead' with an increasing respect for European learning. Politically, the movement distinguished itself by being thoroughly and even theologically pro-British. In return 'it gained the gratitude of both the British Government and the well-to-do Muslims by promulgating this decision and a corollary loyalty.'²² Both Abdul Latif and Sir Syed worked in close collaboration in the beginning. Three years after the foundation of the Mahomedan Literary Society, Syed Ahmad organized a British India Association at Aligarh. The object of this Association was to bring Indian grievances and points of view to the notice of the British people in general, and of the British Parliament in particular. Raja Jaikishandas was elected its President and Sir Syed its Secretary. 'The Association was the first joint Hindu-Muslim Organization,' remarked Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada.²³ It had a very brief existence and its only significant achievement was the elaboration of a scheme to establish a vernacular university. This project became a subject of dispute through the anti-Urdu campaign started by some prominent Hindus of Benaras in 1867, which led to the demand that in the vernacular university Hindi should be the medium of instruction for the Hindus. The scheme was ultimately scotched by the Urdu-Hindi controversy. Sir Syed saw the Hindu offensive against Urdu not only as a reflection of the Hindu cultural revival, but a mortal blow to the prospect of Hindu-Muslim partnership in any common enterprise. Syed Ahmad's Urdu biographer Maulana Hali remarked that as the question of language was elemental, therefore Sir Syed thought that if an artificial demarcation was made between the two sections of the Indian people on the basic question of a vehicle of thought, it would not be possible to have any common ground in the higher affairs of life. 'The change in the Syed's outlook was so sudden and complete' that when he spoke to the Commissioner of Benaras division about the need for denominational education for the Muslims, the latter was greatly surprised and remarked that it was the first time he heard something about just one section of the population of the country from Syed Ahmad's lips.²⁴

It appears that the Urdu-Hindi controversy followed by Sir Syed's visit to England in 1869, left an abiding influence on his mind. After his return, he devoted himself whole-

heartedly to the cause of Muslim education. He realized from his experience that unless the Muslims were educationally at par with the Hindus, there was no chance of the former's holding their ground. With this end in view he started the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh. The College was 'the constructive expression of Sir Syed's mission to reconcile Moslems to British rule,' and constituted 'a retreat from the politics of opposition so much ingrained in the Muslim community', remarked Sachin Sen.²⁵ The Syed's ardent and sustained pro-British policy both politically and otherwise, owed its remarkable success and widespread influence not only to the position in which the class who accepted it found themselves, but also to the support lent to it by the British Government. Sir Syed succeeded because there was 'a growing demand for the contribution he was making, a growing audience glad to listen to him.'²⁶ His influence was in northern and inland India, where British economic and cultural penetration came late, and the 'incipient Muslim bourgeoisie, created by and developing under the bureaucratic and industrial imperialism of the British,' was late in starting and hence remained dependent longer. But it was there too, that the Revolt of 1857 took its worst toll. So there was an added burden on the Syed's shoulders to develop throughout North India, the loyalty of the Muslim middle-class to the British rulers. In Bengal proper, Bombay, and Madras, the three port areas, the centres from which British commerce and culture radiated the bourgeoisie developed earlier and consequently reached the stage of independence sooner. Moreover, all these areas remained outside the pale of the Mutiny. But the Muslims of Bengal, in addition to certain disabilities peculiar to their community, suffered more acutely in comparison to the much more advanced Hindus. In the face of unequal educational and political development, the question of Muslim survival in this province got linked up with the demand for separate community treatment which found its most notable exponent in Syed Ameer Ali. While Syed Ahmad in the United Provinces and Abdul Latif in Bengal devoted themselves whole-heartedly to the cause of Muslim education, Ameer Ali agitated for a share of the Muslims in the Government services. Like most of his contemporaries, Ali feared

'the rising tide of unregulated Nationalism', whereby one side was animated with the ambition of dominance and the other was obsessed with the fear of subordination. It was his opinion that if instead of basing British rule entirely on the old conservative forces which were supposed to be in its favour, the younger generation had been taken into counsel at the earliest possible stage of development, then 'the growing disposition to be captious and hypercritical would have been kept under'.²⁷ While Ameer Ali voiced the general apprehension of the Muslim mind, his method of confronting the problem was one of positive participation in politics by the Muslims in place of the negative withdrawal advocated by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan.

Both in England and in India Ameer Ali had frequent opportunities of discussing with Sir Syed the position of the Muslims in the political economy of British India and their future prospects. Syed Ahmad pinned his faith on English education and academic training. Ameer Ali admitted their importance, but urged that unless, as a community, their political training ran on parallel lines with that of their Hindu compatriots, they were certain to be submerged in the rising tide of nationalism. Syed Ahmad at first did not admit the correctness of Ali's forecast, but the birth of the Indian National Congress, in the latter's opinion, opened his eyes. When in 1877, Ameer Ali along with others of the younger groups of the Muslim middle-class took the initiative in founding a political organization²⁸ in Bengal and invited Sir Syed to extend his valuable support to it, the latter declined. But years later, after the foundation of the Congress, when Syed Ahmad established the Muhammadan Defence Association, Ameer Ali looked upon it as 'rather an unfortunate move and likely to be considered provocative'.²⁹ Subsequent developments leading to the foundation of the Muslim League in 1906 only proved the validity of Ameer Ali's thesis. Three decades prior to the foundation of the League, Syed Ameer Ali, in direct contravention of the views and preachings of Sir Syed and his camp-followers, founded in Calcutta the National Mahomedan Association and appropriated for the Bengali Muslims the credit for taking the lead in a matter of vital importance.

In the 1870s the educated Muslims of Calcutta were divided into two main factions with their respective spokesmen. The former was predominantly Sunni and the latter predominantly Shia in composition. Another distinguishing characteristic of the latter faction was that most of its prominent members hailed from Bihar. Apart from the two chief protagonists of the Muslim community, Abdul Latif and Syed Ameer Ali, the achievements of Nawab Amir Ali Khan (1810-1879) who belonged to the Syed's camp, are seldom taken into consideration. Next to Sir Salar Jung, Nawab Ameer Ali was described by Sir Richard Temple as 'the best Muhammadan' he had ever known. The Nawab wielded great influence not only among his co-religionists but among Europeans and Hindus alike, 'as one of the leading Muhammadans of the day in Bengal'. Possibly overshadowed by more illustrious personages like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Nawab Abdul Latif and Syed Ameer Ali, the Nawab remains a somewhat side-tracked personality in historical evaluation. Seven years senior to Sir Syed and eighteen years to Abdul Latif, Nawab Ameer Ali, though not educated in English, 'was quick to see that the old conservative feeling of exclusiveness in social relations and education could only be persisted in at the expense of the general prosperity and well-being of the Muhammadan community'.³⁰ The Nawab was never tired of expatiating on the advantages of British rule in India, and with this object wrote in Persian a work known as the *Amir Nawab*, on the history of the British administration in India, which met with considerable success.³¹ In recognition of his services, he was made a Khan Bahadur in 1864 and was appointed a member of the Bengal Legislative Council in 1865 by the British Government.³² Among his many activities that which was destined to assume perhaps the greatest importance of all, was his foundation of the National Mahomedan Association at Calcutta in 1877 in conjunction with Syed Ameer Ali. The Hindus were deriving immense advantages and preponderance from their organizations; whereas the Muslims were suffering from a lack of cohesion and the absence of any representative body to take actions on its behalf. In order to obviate this difficulty the National Mahomedan Association was instituted with Nawab Ameer Ali as its President and Syed Ameer Ali as its Secretary. Very soon the latter, a

rising barrister, replaced Abdul Latif as the chief confidant of the British officials in Calcutta. Between Syed Ameer Ali, the head of the advanced party, and his followers who 'played into the hands of the Government', and Abdul Latif, the leader of the 'old-fashioned Mohammedans who kept themselves independent',³³ but 'were afraid to express their opinions', there was a world of difference. Latif and his adherents looked upon Ali as a renegade and one who posed as a reformer and was 'in no way qualified in a religious sense for such a position'.³⁴ 'These young men (Ameer Ali and his followers) were out of all sympathy with the mass of the Mohammedans', who were Sunnis, whereas Ameer Ali was a Shia. 'How could they serve as medium between the English Government and them?'³⁵ Yet Blunt was inclined to think that Ali and his coterie were 'more likely to succeed' since they 'represented the future, he (Latif) the past'.³⁶

Syed Ameer Ali felt that great changes were impending in the system of Government and 'unless the followers of Islam prepared themselves, they would soon be outstripped in the political race by their Hindu fellow-countrymen'.³⁷ The policy of dependence without any self-exertion on the part of the Muslims was, in Ali's opinion, 'impolitic, unwise and suicidal'. He further stated that the Muslims had been repeatedly told not to assert their proper position among the Indian nationalities, or claim from the Government their legitimate rights. This course, in his judgment was 'unwise and short-sighted'. Until the establishment of the National Mahomedan Association, there existed no political body among the Indian Muhammadans capable of representing to the Government from a loyal but independent standpoint, the hopes and aspirations, the legitimate wants and requirements of the large body of Muslims in this country who, by their number and homogeneity, constituted such an important factor in all questions concerning the welfare of India. The few Muhammadan societies which had been formed here and there, with the exception of the *Anjuman* of 1855 were, in the main, literary and scientific, having for their ostensible object the promotion of a desire for European knowledge among the Muhammadans. The absence of a really representative political institution

occasionally forced the Government to consult these societies upon questions affecting the Muhammadan community of particular localities. The opinions thus elicited hardly represented the views of the leaders of thought among them, who were alive to the exigencies of the times. The factions and cliques into which the Muhammadan community was divided not only prevented them from acting in concert with their Hindu and Christian fellow subjects on general questions of public policy, but absolutely precluded the possibility of collective action in the way of social progress and reform. In order to obviate the difficulties under which the Muhammadans had laboured till then, the National Mahomedan Association was instituted for the protection and conservation of the general interests of the community.

The principal endeavour of this Association was directed towards promoting a thorough solidarity among the Muslims in all parts of India and to induce a harmony of feeling and unity of action among the disintegrated masses of Muslim society.³⁸ To associate the Muslims in other parts of India with the aims of his organization this Bengal pressure group tried to extend its field of action. Ameer Ali travelled far and wide 'visiting other Muslim centres and busying himself with their problems'.³⁹ Though holding the important portfolio of the Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta, Ali found time to organize some 54 Branches of the Association.⁴⁰ It became necessary then to change the name of the parent organization to Central National Mahomedan Association. Frankly modelled on the Indian Association of Ananda Mohan Bose and S. N. Banerjea, the Association tried to cater to the slowly emerging educated middle-class amongst the Muslims. Founded essentially on the principle of strict and loyal adherence to the British Crown, the Association sought by constant endeavours to obtain from the Government a recognition of the 'just and reasonable claims' of the Muslims. Ali's endeavour undoubtedly marked a significant departure from all the previous organizations of the Muslims, which aimed at the 'intellectual, moral and social regeneration' of their co-religionists, but sedulously avoided the term 'political'. Though the Central National Mahomedan Association had Hindus in its committee, and as ordinary and honorary members⁴¹ and had on one or two

occasions co-operated with their respective organizations,⁴² yet it tended increasingly to follow an exclusive and separatist line, the motto being 'Muslims for the Muslims'. It began by demanding that the British Government should give preference to Muslims, because of the latter's backwardness and political importance, in matters of education and employment,⁴³ and soon moved on to insist that competitive examinations as a mode of selecting candidates for civil offices should be abandoned and that Muslims should have separate representation on elective bodies.⁴⁴

'Reactionary rulers are often the creators of great public movements', wrote S. N. Banerjea in his autobiography.⁴⁵ Lord Salisbury's regime as Secretary of State for India was distinctly reactionary. He was responsible for sending out to India as Viceroy, Lord Lytton, of whom the Marquis of Hartington said from his place in Parliament, that he was the very reverse of what an Indian Viceroy should be. The year which witnessed the inception of the National Mahomedan Association also saw the beginning of a campaign against the reduction of the maximum age limit for the Civil Service Examination from 21 to 19. It was regarded as a deliberate attempt by the bureaucracy to blast the prospects of the Indian candidates for the open competitive Civil Service Examination. For the first time in the history of India an agitation was set on foot to unite the different parts of the country 'through a sense of common grievance and the inspiration of a common resolve', and Banerjea was appointed special delegate to visit the different provinces. The most important personage whom he met in course of his itinerary was Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. The latter presided over the Civil Service meeting at Aligarh, which accepted the Calcutta Resolution, among which was one in favour of simultaneous examinations. It is worthy of note, however, that with the differences of opinion which the Congress movement subsequently gave rise to, Sir Syed as a member of the Public Services Commission of 1887, signed the report of the majority, and did not join Sir Ramesh Chunder Mitter and Rai Bahadur Nulkar in their support of simultaneous examinations. The Civil Service agitation had disclosed, in spite of the differences in race, religion or language, the essential unity of Indian aims and aspirations, which was

the product of a common system of administration and education. It was an axiom of British policy at that time that the people should be kept 'in almost a stupor of contentment...'⁴⁶ But Ripon's administration (1880-84) 'had caused the volcano to rumble'. The agitation over the Ilbert Bill (1883) and Surendranath Banerjea's imprisonment (1883) helped to intensify the growing feeling of unity among the Indian intelligentsia which found its culmination in the Congress Movement. 'The repressive measures of the 1870s had begun to push educated Indians towards politics; the impotence of Ripon's good intentions could only drive them further along the path.'⁴⁷ The demand for representative government was definitely formulated by the eighties of the last century. In its Annual Report of 1880-81 the Indian Association decided to direct its 'unremitting attention' to the problem.⁴⁸ The Association felt that the representative government must be based on local self-government. An agitation was thus carried on for election in place of nomination of the Chairman and members of the local boards and municipalities. The efforts of the Indian Association at this juncture were stimulated by the two notable events, the Ilbert Bill controversy and the imprisonment of Banerjea.

Instead of regarding political aspiration as the natural fruit of western education, Syed Ahmad Khan looked upon political agitation, in particular, as being inconsistent with that sentimental loyalty to the Government to which he adhered as a form of reaction against Wahhabism and the Revolt of 1857. The Muslim resolve to keep aloof from politics was the culmination of a process of thinking set afoot by the unquestioned leader of the community, Syed Ahmad Khan. However on this basis, it would be unfair to conclude that Sir Syed was politically apathetic. As early as 1858, he wrote a treatise in Urdu on the causes of the Indian Revolt of 1857. The book was a bold indictment of the Government of India and its administration at a time when the Anglo-Indian press was advocating 'a very firm line'. According to Sir Syed, the basic cause of the Revolt was the non-admission of any Indian to the legislative councils. This book became 'the starting point for many reforms... In a way, the book also led to the birth of the Indian Congress and eventually, the

Muslim League...⁴⁹ Syed Tufail Ahmad, in his *Musalmanon ka Roshan Mustaqbil*, claimed that Allan Octavian Hume after reading Syed Ahmad's book, felt the need for having a forum of public opinion in India and eventually the Indian National Congress came into existence.⁵⁰ Yet when the Congress did come into existence Sir Syed fought shy of it and dreaded it as an eruption of political discontent. But in fairness to Sir Syed it may be mentioned that if he refused to join the Congress later, he had earlier dissociated himself from 'a purely, Muslim movement' by refusing to attend the inauguration of the National Mahomedan Association at Calcutta. 'If the Wahhabi was a religious fanatic, Sir Syed Ahmad was an educational one', remarked Kelkar.⁵¹ As a matter of fact, even before the establishment of the Congress, the Aligarh Muslims under the leadership of Syed Ahmad had been systematically opposing two of the main pivots on which the Congress movement was hinged, viz., democratic representative parliamentary Government and open competitive examination. The *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, the chief organ of the movement, presented a number of forceful arguments during the years 1874-75, against the demand for an Indian parliament, proposing to postpone the establishment of a parliamentary system for a hundred years.⁵² Although Sir Syed had originally thought that the Muslims would gain by open competitive examinations, he soon came to change his views mainly in view of the fact that 'in case of equal facilities for competition, the Hindus would leave the Muslims far behind'.⁵³ According to M. S. Jain 'the criticism by the Bengali press of the selection of Sameeullah Khan, as a district judge, without a knowledge of English, finally changed his views'.⁵⁴ Last, but not the least, the influence of Theodore Beck, the English Principal of the Aligarh College from 1884 onwards, was singularly successful in strengthening Sir Syed's opposition to the Congress movement and all that it stood for. There is a school of writers who interpret Sir Syed's opposition to the nationalist agitation either in terms of the machination of British imperialism, or the personal influence of the European Principals of the Aligarh College. But M. S. Jain holds that 'both these views ignore Sir Syed's political ideas and philosophy which had been advocated by him much before he

came in contact with Beck and other prominent Englishmen'.⁵⁵

The Ilbert Bill agitation can perhaps be regarded as the last major issue on which Sir Syed joined hands with the Hindus in denouncing the 'invidious race distinctions'. But at the same time, he expressed a very significant hope that his countrymen would in no part of India follow the example of 'those who think that the vehemence of public demonstrations is the best way of submitting arguments and claims for the consideration of the legislature. The people of India, strongly as they feel in favour of the justice, the wisdom and the expediency of this Bill, need no demonstration in favour of the measure'. Sir Syed rather wished to leave the measure 'to be decided upon its own merits'.⁵⁶ Thus when in December 1885, the first National Congress met at Bombay it is easy to imagine in what light it was looked upon by Sir Syed. The educated Muslims of Bengal also went against the Hindu mainstream and supported the Ilbert Bill, lest an agitation on their part be construed as an act of disloyalty in the eyes of the Anglo-Indian officials. This attitude was naturally resented by the nationalist Hindu leaders. N. N. Sen, the editor of the *Indian Mirror* complained to W. S. Blunt that the Muslims were timid and time-serving and were afraid of the Government. Ameer Ali, head of the advanced party, was accused along with his followers of having played into the hands of the Government. But Sen was more sympathetic towards Latif and the old-fashioned Muhammadans who had at least kept themselves independent.⁵⁷ In vain did W. S. Blunt (with whom Banerjee 'was very urgent' to get the Muslims to join them in protesting against the Bill) try to persuade Ameer Ali and his followers to support the Hindus in the matter. The negative reaction of the Muslims was characteristically expressed by one Kabir-ud-Din, a joint editor of the one Muhammadan journal published in Calcutta and who belonged to the Ameer Ali faction, when he said that there was no Muslim in the civil service who would benefit by the Bill and that the principle of legislating in native interests was not at stake in this matter.⁵⁸ Ameer Ali ultimately supported the Ilbert compromise. 'Neither Ameer Ali nor Abdel-Latif could afford to come forward as champions,' reported Blunt, 'as all their prospects depended on the Government'.⁵⁹

Ali's attitude was 'not that of a leader'. 'He wants to please the Government,' snubbed Blunt.⁶⁰ Ameer Ali retorted in his *Memoirs* years later that Blunt had 'grossly misrepresented' his attitude and 'imputed to me unworthy motives in his book of travels'.⁶¹ Be that as it may, the fact remains that even before the foundation of the Indian National Congress, when Indian nationalism was still in an embryonic form, 'denominationalistic forces had started their work like an undercurrent in the opposite direction'.⁶²

In 1882, when Syed Ahmad was a member of the Viceroy's Legislative Council, the Hindus raised a storm of opposition against the use of Urdu in the Education Commission. Before the Muslims had adopted a formal position *vis-a-vis* the elective system, the Urdu-Hindi controversy blasted all hopes for common action. Sir Syed's disillusionment came not in the political arena but in the matter of script. His celebrated speech on the Local Self-Government Bill on 12 January 1883 should therefore be studied against this background. In course of the speech, Syed Ahmad pointed out that he was fully convinced that 'the introduction of the principle of election, pure and simple for representation of various interests on the local boards and the district councils, would be attended with evils of greater significance than purely economic considerations... The larger community would totally override the interests of the smaller community...'.⁶³ Although in making the above speech Sir Syed was merely formulating in more certain terms, his views, already expressed a decade earlier in the *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, yet the last sentence was highly significant, because the concept of the majority, i.e. the educated Hindus totally overriding the interests of the smaller community, i.e. the backward Muslims, was conspicuously communal in tone.

While Syed Ahmad merely expressed the fear of majority dominance, what is usually not known is that a Muhammadan gentleman from Bengal, Mahomed Yusuf, a few months later was the first to demand reservation of seats for the Muslims in the more extended scheme of local self-government. It was indeed a creditable achievement for Yusuf to stand forth as the champion of democracy when men like Kristodas Pal, Maharaja Jatindramohan Tagore and Raja Digambar Mitra

had opposed the introduction of local self-government in the Calcutta Municipality. The working of the local self-government in Bengal through which the Hindus gained a preponderating representation was felt by the Muslims to be a grievous injury to their interests. Ripon's local self-government schemes gave point to those fears. As a member of the Bengal Provincial Council, Mahomed Yusuf drew attention to the question regarding 'the representation of the minority'.⁶⁴ The Bill proposed to provide for this by nomination. But 'it would be an advantage and a more fit recognition of the claims of the Muhammadan population if provision could be made in the Bill for the election of Muhammadans by reserving a certain number of memberships for that community', remarked Yusuf.⁶⁵ This speech shows that the first claim for separate representation for the Muslims in elected bodies was made in Bengal and was 'long anterior to the Morley-Minto Reform Scheme, to which the origin of this claim is generally ascribed'.⁶⁶ This matter had struck the minds of others as well, because the circulation with the Bill of a report of the Commissioner of the Presidency Division (paragraph 47) had some bearing on the question. One almost certain result of the adoption of the elective principle in *Mofussil* districts, in the opinion of the Commissioner, would be the exclusion of the Muslims from the local boards and the consequent neglect of their interests. The agitators in the matter were all Hindus and the 'Local Boards instituted as proposed will be comprised almost entirely of Hindus to the exclusion of Mahomedans'. This fact in the opinion of the Commissioner would go far to show 'how non-representative the character and constitution of Local Boards on the elective principle will be'. The exclusion from administrative posts of Muhammadans in favour of Hindus was not unfelt by the former and 'public expression' on the subject was lately given.⁶⁷ According to Rivers Thompson, so 'insuperable' were 'religious animosities' that if the Hindus replaced the district officer as the power in the localities, local government would come to a halt.⁶⁸ The Lieutenant-Governor was able to use this spectre to deny Ripon's experiment a fair trial in Bengal.

Meanwhile Ameer Ali began to devote himself exclusively to the promotion of Muslim interests.⁶⁹ But there

was one last overt act of co-operation with the nationalists before Ali became committed to an exclusivist line of action. The Second National Conference which met in Calcutta on 25, 26 and 27 December 1885, was convened jointly by the three leading political organizations of Calcutta, viz., the British Indian Association, the Indian Association and the Central National Mahomedan Association. Unlike in 1883, the Indian Association was able this time to secure for its venture the support of these important political bodies in the metropolis. Almost all the questions that were discussed in the two sessions of the conference also 'formed the chief planks in the Congress platform during the first twenty years of its existence'. Pirzada mentions that 'the Central Mohammadan Association was one of the organizers of the first session of the Indian National Congress held in 1885.'⁷⁰ And Ameer Ali had remarked on the occasion: 'We were fully convinced that the aim of the forthcoming Congress is to promote measures which, it is considered, will tend to the amelioration of the conditions of the people of India, and we would greatly regret to do anything which would have even the appearance of withholding from such a worthy object any support which our co-operation might give.'⁷¹ Apart from Pirzada, Ali's biographer, K. K. Aziz also mentions that the National Mahomedan Association gave 'lukewarm support' to the first Congress. Yet the above view appears to be untenable on several grounds. In the first place, if the National Mahomedan Association was one of the conveners of the Second National Conference at Calcutta which met up to 27 December, it is difficult to imagine how it was also one of the organizers of the Congress which was inaugurated the following day in Bombay and was a totally independent and separate venture. Secondly, if a section of the Bengali Muhammadans under the leadership of Ameer Ali had supported the inauguration of the Congress, then why were only two Muhammadan gentlemen and that too from Bombay itself, present in its deliberations? And, finally, by omitting to mention the source of his information, Pirzada has left a knotty point unresolved. However, the fact that the Central National Mahomedan Association publicly withdrew its support from the second session of the Congress at Calcutta in 1886 is an established

fact. Although it is difficult to find out the immediate reason for this sudden defection, yet it was not surprising in view of the past developments. One of the most primary concerns of Ameer Ali from the very outset was to secure a due representation of the Muslims in the Government services. He was overtly sensitive to the fact that it was almost impossible for a Muslim candidate to obtain a footing in any Government office, 'with every avenue to public employment already jealously blocked by an antagonistic and versatile race'.⁷² He meant no animus against the Hindus, but devoutly wished for the balance of state patronage between the two communities to be restored. Ali, in fact, was one of the foremost Muslim personalities to realize that the benefits of combined action would flow solely to the Hindus. It was therefore necessary to organize the Muslims on a separate political platform to prevent them from being submerged in the 'rising tide of unregulated nationalism'. What appeared to be quite innocuous at this stage inexorably reached a point of confrontation, when the Muslims categorically refused to commit their interests in their own words, to the 'mercy of an unsympathetic majority'.

The persistent refusal of the Muslims to act in concert with the other communities in political matters was brought into prominent relief when the first Indian National Congress met at Bombay, on 28-30 December 1885. In such a 'comprehensive assemblage', 'only one great race was conspicuous by its absence', remarked the Bombay Correspondent of the *Times*. The Muslims of India 'remained steadfast in their habitual separation'.⁷³ Although it must be admitted that the Muhammadan community was not adequately represented in proportion to its number and importance, yet two leading Muhammadans R. M. Sayani and A. M. Dharamsi, both graduates of the University and attorneys of standing at the High Court of Bombay, did attend the Congress session. The eagerness of the *Times* to underline the 'absence' of the Muhammadans as 'a sufficiently ominous fact' appeared like a deliberate attempt on the part of the Anglo-Indian journalists to present the Congress as 'a one-sided affair'. The organizers of the Congress felt that an effort was being unfortunately made from the very beginning to detract from

the national character of this assemblage, by emphasizing the fact that the Muhammadans were inadequately represented. So far as the abstention of the Bengali Muslims from the Congress was concerned, it was partly the natural result of the lack of higher education and the consequent apathy of the Muslims to all large political questions of the day. In Bengal only 0.6 per cent of the males above 10 years of age in the case of the Muslims were 'persons engaged in the learned professions and in literature, art and science', while the corresponding figure for the Hindus was no less than 1.78 per cent.⁷⁴ It may also be added that the lamentable poverty of the Muslims did not allow them to attend, as delegates, any Congress held so far from their homes.

The Congress in its very first session in 1885 passed resolutions regarding the reconstitution of the Legislative Council on a representative basis and the holding of open competitive examinations in India for admission to the Civil Service. Sir Syed opposed the former idea vehemently in an article and remarked: 'If at any future time there should be a parliament with Hindus and Mohammedans sitting on the two sides of the house, ... and one side were perpetually outvoted, there is only too much fear that the minority would... see if they could gain by force what they were unable to obtain by constitutional means.'⁷⁵ Notwithstanding the contradictions in Sir Syed's political attitudes, his *volte-face* against the Congress initially surprised its organizers. In November 1886, before the second Congress met, Syed Ahmad publicly declared India unready for representative Government and condemned the Congress as 'seditious'.⁷⁶ It is however known that the anti-Congress and anti-Bengali articles appearing in the College magazine regularly during this period had been actually written by Theodore Beck, the European Principal of the College, who wrote in Sir Syed's name.⁷⁷ Sir Syed's anti-Congress proclivities found constructive expression in his foundation of the All India Muhammadan Educational Congress in December 1886, 'to create communal consciousness and solidarity' among his co-religionists. To keep the attention and interests of the educated Muslims away from the Congress and the field of political criticism, Sir Syed held the sessions of the Educational Congress at the same time as those

of the National Congress. In a sense the Muhammadan Educational Congress became 'a mirror image of the Indian National Congress'. The irony of these rival Congresses meeting in upper India at the same time was not lost upon the *Pioneer*, which remarked in its columns, 'The one proposed to represent the Muhammadan Community; the other represented it...'.⁷⁸

The second session of the Congress which met at Calcutta in December 1886 was attended by only 33 Muslims (out of a total of 434 delegates) of whom 17 were from Bengal proper. While Sir Syed and the Bengali Muslims had different reasons for not joining the Congress, both were against it when the time came for them to decide. It was clear to Ameer Ali that the demands chalked out by the educated Hindus in the first Congress could not be accepted. The Bengali Muslims were already at such a disadvantage *vis-a-vis* their Hindu competitors that they were not ready for the rigours of competitive existence. The Muslims of the upper provinces on the contrary feared the undermining of their superior position by competition from Bengali *Babus*. Already in April 1886, Ameer Ali had steered clear of the Bengal National League which had been formed specifically to agitate for elected councils, fearing that few Muslims would get the vote under the proposed franchise. Finally when the Congress met that year at Calcutta, Ameer Ali had already decided that the 'unqualified adoption' of its programme would lead to the 'political extinction' of the Muhammadans. Both Ameer Ali and Abdul Latif saw fit at the last moment to declare publicly against the Congress. 'The Muhammadans of Calcutta and its neighbourhood, not knowing what might be behind these manifestos almost as a body abstained from taking any part in the movement.'⁷⁹

In a letter dated 12 December 1886, Ameer Ali informed the secretaries to the National Congress, that the Committee of the Central National Mahomedan Association having given their best consideration to the aims and objects of the proposed Congress, had 'resolved to abstain from participating' in its proceedings. The reason behind this decision was that there was no question which the Congress sought to take up, which in the opinion of the Central National Mahomedan Association was not receiving from the Government of India

and Her Majesty's Government in England, the share of attention to which it was entitled. The Committee further felt that 'any attempt to force the hands of the Government on these important questions' or 'assuming an attitude of uneasiness towards the Government', would be impeding rather than advancing the public interests. The circumstances of the country were such as suggested to all interested in its welfare 'a policy of confidence in the Government'.⁸⁰ Shortly afterwards, in a separate letter dated 22 December 1886, addressed to the Reception Committee of the Congress, the Secretary, (of the Mahomedan Literary Society) Nawab Abdul Latif, pointed out that the Committee of the Mahomedan Literary Society preferred 'not to hamper Government in any way', at a time when the Government was carefully considering 'how best to meet the natural aspiration of the natives of India'. Moreover, with their past experience of memorializing to the Government, the Committee preferred to adhere 'to this legitimate and hitherto successful mode of procedure' in any future matter that might necessitate action, rather than take up a 'hasty consideration of difficult and momentous questions'. Finally, the Mahomedan Literary Society, representing the orthodox Muhammadan community in India, was not disposed to accept proposals, however well-meant, which had a tendency 'to revolutionize time-honoured institutions, and to bring about changes which were novel, and which they considered unsuited to the exigencies of the country, and the various and conflicting interests in it'.⁸¹ The attempt of Syed Ameer Ali and Nawab Abdul Latif to keep the Muslims away from the Congress threatened at first sight to mar its success. Indeed, when the Muhammadan delegates arrived from other parts of India (Madras, Bombay, North-Western Provinces, Oudh and the chief towns and cities of Bengal) they were confronted and asked not to put in their appearance at the Congress. 'The Hindus are ahead of us. We are lagging behind them. We still want the patronage of Government, and shall gain nothing by joining them.' This was the plea urged for the conversion of the Muslim delegates.

The replies of the Mahomedan Associations apparently created among the unthinking section of the Hindu community a considerable amount of ill-feeling, and there have been

attempts to minimize the effect in different ways. As a matter of fact from this period onwards, dates the battle in the press and on the platform between the supporters and the opponents of the Congress. As the former were mainly Hindus and the latter mainly Muslims, before long the controversy assumed a communal complexion. The supporters of the Congress tried to prove that the Muslims who joined the movement were intellectuals and patriots and really representative of their community, while the opponents projected a contrary view. Aggressive speeches and militant articles in the press aggravated a steadily worsening situation. The philo-Hindu journals on the one hand sought to weaken the moral effect of the Muhammadan Associations' replies by pointing out that the Muslim manifestos were the work of a few interested Muhammadans in Calcutta, that the Central National Mahomedan Association represented only a few Calcutta and Patna Muhammadans, and that the bulk of the Muhammadan population was at heart sympathetic to the Congress. The Muslim journals on the other hand spared no pains to label the Congress as a Hindu organization serving to promote Hindu interests; and that the Muslims would have failed in their duties if they had allowed themselves to be drawn into the vortex of political agitation, instead of protecting and safeguarding their own interests. They contended that until the Muslims came abreast with the Hindus in education and political intelligence, political concessions to the majority without sufficient guarantees, would be destructive to the minority interests.⁶²

Meanwhile the Executive Committee of the Central National Mahomedan Association in response to the adverse reaction in a section of the press, remarked that while it had 'much sympathy with some of the objects' of the Congress and 'great respect for the principal leaders of the movement', it was firmly convinced that 'the unqualified adoption of the programme of the Congress will lead to the political extinction of the Mohamedans'. The Committee could not consent to the introduction of representative institutions in the country 'in their entirety which would be disadvantageous to the Muslims or to any system which would result in the minority being utterly swamped in every department of state'. It depre-

cated the want of foresight of a section of the Muslims who endorsed 'in their entirety, the views and claims of the Congress'. The Committee believed that 'until the Muhammadans are on a par with the Hindus in political development and educational progress and the assertion and preservation of Muhammadan interests are included in the Congress programme the consummation wished for by the Congressists will end in the absolute effacement of the Muhammadans as a community in this country.'⁸³

This defection, as the promoters of the National Congress called it, of the Muslims of Bengal, was not altogether unexpected in view of the backward condition of the community at large. This attitude was merely an outward expression of the spirit that was working amongst them of late. But, as an open rupture at that juncture, it was more than ever to be regretted, as both the Hindus and the Muslims, and ultimately the Government had to suffer by it. 'It would certainly have been wiser for the Association to have said nothing, and simply abstained from taking any part in the Congress, than to have placed this evidence upon formal record, that as a community, they have no sympathy with the aspirations of their fellow countrymen', remarked *the Statesman*.⁸⁴ The matter was of no importance and need not have been noticed 'but for the absurd prominence given to it by some of the Anglo-Indian journals, who vainly sought to attach to it a gave political significance'.⁸⁵ The Congress naturally regretted this abstention of the Muslims as a body from their counsels. It was their argument that there was nothing in the proceedings of the Congress to which the most pronounced 'Babu-phobist' could object. Hence, there was bound to be an adverse reaction in the other circles, when the two luminaries of the Bengal Muslims, the Mahomedan Literary Society and the National Mahomedan Association, resolved upon holding aloof from the Congress. At a time when the popular cry was for representation in its real form, not the 'hollow sham' which obtained in the Presidency and Supreme Legislative Councils, the Muslim secession was ever more regretted. While admitting that the reasons urged were '*prima facie* substantial enough and sufficiently tenable', the *Express* regretted that an influential Muhammadan section

separated itself from a Conference which was not convened for the purpose of embarrassing the Government, but rather to assist it with suggestions and advice, the outcome of the deliberations shared in by popular representatives from every part of the country.⁸⁶

If the upper class Muslims of Bengal had kept almost entirely aloof from the Congress movement, there was a section of individual and influential Muslims who rallied to the Congress from its inception, and actively spurned the secessionist appeals of their anti-Congress brethren. They were congratulated by a radical organ like the *Indian Mirror* for coming out of 'the pale of a small coterie in Calcutta' and for being in perfect accord and sympathy with the objects of the Congress.⁸⁷ The one Bengali Muslim to attain any kind of prominence in Congress affairs or organization prior to 1905 seems to have been Abul Kasem of Burdwan (*zamindar*, journalist by profession, Municipal Commissioner, Honorary Magistrate and Member of the District Board of Burdwan). He attended almost all the sessions of the Congress from 1896 onwards. No other Muslim supporter of the Congress attended so regularly. The Muslims of Bombay and Madras Presidencies on the other hand joined it in considerable numbers, among whom were such influential men as Badruddin Tyabji, Mir Humayun Jah, Ali Mohammad Bhimji and others. It may be interesting to note here that in Bombay there were several influential and wealthy sects of Muhammadans mostly engaged in commercial pursuits and to a great extent free from 'those religious and social necessities for the study of Urdu, Persian and Arabic, which was necessary for the bulk of Indian Mohammedans'.⁸⁸ Consequently their progress was not hampered either by economic insolvency or by artificial restrictions. Similarly statements were not wanting to testify that the Muhammadans of Bihar and Oudh had 'the fullest sympathy with the objects of the Congress', and that it was not the Muslims, 'but their official masters, who are opposed to the Congress'.⁸⁹ This pro-Congress feeling was however not confined to the educated élite or the merchant class among the Muslims. While Sir Syed repeatedly asked the Muslims to keep away from the Congress, 'the Deobandi leadership was in favour of full co-operation with it'.⁹⁰ The advice of

such outstanding divines as Maulana Rasheed Ahmad Gangohi of Deoband, Maulavi Lutfullah of Aligarh, and Mulla Mohammad Murad of Muzaffarnagar was that it was perfectly legitimate for the Muslims to join hands with their Hindu compatriots for bettering their worldly condition. The *ulema* however did not actually participate in the deliberations of the Congress which were carried on in English, a language which they did not understand.⁹¹

The rift between the two groups of separatist and nationalist Muslims found expression in the press and on the platform for the first time during the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1886. The short-sighted action of those abstaining did not commend itself to the Muslims of India as a body. Sheikh Reza Hossain, the President of the Rifa-i-am (the most important Association in Upper India) in a speech remarked that it was a 'calumny' to call the Congress a Hindu Congress or that the Muhammadans had no sympathy with this great national movement. In his opinion, the actions of those Muslims who held back from the Congress were rather 'the result of prejudice and selfishness than of principle and reason'.⁹² The same Report quoted quite a few passages from the speeches of wealthy and enlightened Muslims of Upper India repudiating the action of certain Bengal Muhammadans and testifying to the fact that the Muslims of these parts were too wise not to understand that their interests, where the political enfranchisement of the country was concerned, were identical with those of the other communities. In his annual address to the Positivists, H. J. S. Cotton, one of the clearest-sighted of European officials in India, pointed out that the reluctance of the Muslims in co-operating with the Congress was limited to Bengal and was not shared by their co-religionists in North-Western, Western, Central and Southern India. While stigmatizing the action as 'unwise', he at the same time admitted that this reluctance 'under all the circumstances of the case, historic and otherwise', was 'perhaps not unnatural'.⁹³

Before long, even in Calcutta itself, a certain reaction took place, and at any rate some of the Muslims felt and admitted that a mistake had been made. In view of the sudden schism of the Calcutta Muhammadan leaders, it was

felt that Ameer Ali and the Nawab, before taking such a momentous step, ought to have ascertained, beyond doubt, that the community which they were supposed to represent, desired, them to take such action. As the letters written by the two Secretaries, Latif and Ali, were sent for publication to the press, the natural inference was that the Societies in question themselves wished it to be known that their members, as a body, disapproved of the movement which the Congress represented. 'We are not able to affirm', wrote the *Statesman*, 'that they did not take it, but there is, we fear, a strong presumption against their having done so'.⁹⁴ 'We make these remarks, because we have received strong assurance that the members do not approve the action that has been taken, professedly in their name.'⁹⁵ At this critical juncture, a newspaper controversy regarding Muslim participation in, and abstention from, the Congress was sparked off in the columns of the *Statesman* with the publication of a letter of protest on 25 December 1886, against the action of Ameer Ali as the Secretary of the Central National Mahomedan Association. The author, claimed to be one Abdus Salem, belonging to a well-known Muslim family in Collinga, a graduate of the Calcutta University and a member of the Central National Mahomedan Association. He affirmed that the letter addressed by Ameer Ali to the reception committee of the Congress was without the knowledge of the members of the Association generally, and that 'it represented views which the Association as a body do not share'.⁹⁶ The cause for this dissent was stated by the author in a subsequent letter dated 26 December 1886, in which he said that Ameer Ali and his clique were afraid that if they joined the Congress, the Government favours recently bestowed upon the Muslims would be at stake.⁹⁷ There was naturally a great sensation in the Muhammadan community. But the sense of surprise and shock was heightened when, as an anti-climax, came Ameer Ali's letter to the editor, dubbing Abdus Salems's first letter as 'a forgery pure and simple'.⁹⁸ After making the relevant enquiries, the *Statesman* admitted that the whole thing was 'a stupid hoax', an impudent attempt to make the public believe that they were from the pen of Maulvie Abdus Salam,⁹⁹ M.A., the Deputy Magistrate of Rajshahi. Though the letter under consideration was

a hoax, yet in the light of its publication two alternative possibilities emerged clearly. If it was written by a Muslim under a pretended name, it at least gave vent to a dissenting voice. If on the contrary, it emanated from a Hindu supporter of the Congress, it was certainly a reflection of the questionable methods adopted by the latter to prove Muhammadan sympathy with the Congress movement. In a letter to the editor dated 26 December 1886, Abdus Salem publicly disowned the letter in question totally 'both in its tone and sentiments'. This same letter however contained a statement which is of added significance. The Rajshahi branch of the Central National Mahomedan Association, of which Abdus Salem was the Secretary, had been 'only recently' invited to send delegates to the National Congress, but after careful consideration, the committee courteously declined to comply with it. 'This took place about a fortnight ago, that is, before¹⁰⁰ receiving Mr. Amir Ali's letter, *which enunciating as it does identical views and purposes*,¹⁰¹ must naturally command not only my approval but that of the entire body of the Mussulmans in Rajshahye.'¹⁰² In other words, the Secretaries of the main and a branch of the National Mahomedan Association were acting not deliberately, but accidentally in concert on an issue that was destined to have momentous significance in the future.

The third session of the Congress, held at Madras, was presided over by an eminent Muslim leader from Bombay, Badruddin Tyabji who was the unanimous choice of all the Congress leaders; possibly because the previous year's secession from the Congress had made a show of Muslim support for the Congress imperative. Since Tyabji was to be the symbol of Muslim support for the Congress, Ameer Ali sought to wean him away with an invitation to attend an all-India Muslim conference that the Central National Association was then planning. But if Ali's conference was simply to be a rival to the Congress, Tyabji was against it. On the contrary, Tyabji believed that the proper course for the Muslims would be to join the Congress and take part in its deliberations from their own peculiar stand-point.¹⁰³ His policy 'would be to act from *within* rather than from *without*.'¹⁰⁴ As President of the Third Congress, Tyabji made an eloquent appeal to his Muslim brethren to join the Congress in order

to secure 'those great general rights which are for the common benefit of all'. The number of delegates at the third Congress rose to 607 of whom 81 were Muslims, but Bengal proper was represented by the solitary figure of Syed Mahomed Hoshein Ghouse, a medical practitioner from Chinsurah in Hooghly.¹⁰⁵ This appears to be particularly significant in the light of the Calcutta split of the previous year. It was at this session however, that 'a question of great difficulty and delicacy' was raised. Raja Sashi Sekhaheswar Roy of Tahirpore in Bengal gave notice of a resolution urging the prohibition of cow-slaughter. Surendranath Banerjea regretted that in a mixed gathering of Hindus and Muhammadans, especially when the latter were holding aloof from the Congress and the supporters of the movement were 'straining every nerve' to secure their co-operation, it was an extremely inopportune resolution.¹⁰⁶ However, to prevent the Muhammadan interests from being prejudiced, Badruddin Tyabji got an express rule passed whereby no proposition could be brought before the Congress which was unanimously or almost unanimously opposed by the Muhammadan delegates as a body.¹⁰⁷ Simultaneously with the sessions of the third Congress on 28 December 1887, at the Lucknow session of the Mohammedan Education Conference, Sir Syed also delivered a speech for the first time publicly denouncing the Congress movement. This was in his own words his first 'political lecture'. He said: 'They want to copy the British House of Lords and the House of Commons.' Assuming that the Hindu and Muhammadan voters voted for a member each from their respective communities, it was certain 'that the Hindu members will have four times as many (votes) because their population was four times as numerous... And now how can the Muslim guard his interests?'¹⁰⁸ This was stated in connection with the Congress demand that the people should elect a section of the Viceroy's Council. Sir Syed went further and remarked, 'If Government be Wise and Lord Dufferin be a capable Viceroy, then he will realise that a Mohammedan agitation is not the same as a Bengali agitation and he will be bound to apply an adequate remedy.'¹⁰⁹

In reply to the endeavours of Hume and Tyabji to secure Sir Syed's support for the Congress, the latter wrote to Tyabji

on 24 January 1888 : '...you regard the doings of the misnamed National Congress beneficial to India, but I am sorry to say that I regard them as not only injurious to our own community, but also to India at large. *I object to every Congress, in any shape or form whatever, which regards India as one nation.*'¹¹⁰ This was followed by Sir Syed's famous speech at Meerut on 14 March 1888, which smacked of a strong anti-Hindu bias. By now the stand taken by Sir Syed Ahmad was that there was no basic political question which could be brought before the Congress and was not detrimental to the Muslims. Syed Ahmad's anti-Congress attitude and activities culminated in the foundation of the United Indian Patriotic Association in August 1888 with the co-operation of Raja Shib Prosad of Benaras, and 'a great deal of assistance' from Theodore Beck the European Principal of Aligarh College. Both the Hindus and the Muhammadans could be members and patrons of this Association. The scope of the movement launched by the Patriotic Association was however wider than more opposition to the Congress. Its prime motive was the dissemination of conservative views in politics and religion and expose the dangers of a democratic propaganda. Sir Syed's stand-offish attitude in public towards the Congress impressed his political will upon a large section of his co-religionists. Almost all leading Muslim institutions and personalities now became blatant in their condemnation of the Congress. The most outspoken of these was the Pabna Branch of the National Mahommedan Association which wrote : 'It (Congress) is an assemblage of certain ambitious Hindus, the Bengalis taking the warmest interest in it...and as the Bengalis entertain bitter feelings against the Mussalmans,...it is not desirable that any Mussalman should join the Congress.'¹¹¹

Barring a few indirect references, it is difficult to come to a definite conclusion on the basis of evidence available as to the extent to which Syed Ahmad and the Bengali Muslim leaders like Abdul Latif and Syed Ameer Ali agreed or disagreed with each other on the vital issues of the day. Though Sir Syed, Abdul Latif and Ameer Ali were equally opposed to the Congress, yet rather than conducting their oppositional politics from a common political platform, each

of them became the spokesman of rival though not antagonistic institutions of the same school of political persuasion.¹¹² It is interesting for example to read in Blunt's Diary that at a meeting of the *Anjuman-i-Islam* on 2 January 1884, Abdul Latif attacked Syed Ahmad and his school,¹¹³ although the two leaders had worked in close collaboration in the early part of their career. On an earlier occasion on 29 December 1883, Latif's son Abdul Rahman in course of a discussion with Blunt disapproved of Sir Syed's educational and religious ideas. Even when Sir Syed and Ameer Ali condemned the Congress there in nothing to prove that the two leaders were acting conjointly or the one under the other's influence. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan speaking for the Muslim upper classes of Upper India founded the Patriotic Association which had both Hindus and Muslims as its members and patrons, to combat the Congress.

But Syed Ameer Ali speaking for the National Mahomedan Association with its predominantly Bengali Muslim membership, sought to convene a conference of prominent Mohammadans towards the close of 1887 which was decidedly of a more separatist nature than the Patriotic Association of Sir Syed. Ali contended that as certain 'erroneous impressions prevailed in some quarters as to the scope and object of the proposed conference', a Conference Circular was issued in January 1888, in which the true aims and objectives were set forth. The conveners pointed out that in proposing the conference they were not actuated by any spirit of rivalry towards their Hindu co-patriots. The main object was to bring about some degree of solidarity among the disintegrated masses of Muhammadan society; to reconcile in some measure the conflicting aims and objects of different sections and parties; to introduce some amount of harmony among the discordant and jarring elements of which the Muslim educated classes were composed, to devise some means of self-help for advancement so that the Muslims would lean less upon Government patronage; to give a real impetus to the process of self-development, perceptibly going on in the community; to safeguard their legitimate and constitutional interests under the British Government and to become the exponent of the views and aspirations of educated

Muhammadans of India. The Conference did not 'propose to discuss high politics' and the programme set was 'extremely moderate'. 'It must be remembered that the real advancement of our people lies in the future and as nothing can be built without a foundation, we hope by this conference to give a shape to our aspirations and lay the foundation stone of future good.'¹¹⁴ 'Ameer Ali wanted the power,' remarked Anil Seal, 'which would flow from a communal demand without the responsibility attaching to political activity.' Owing, however, to several unavoidable causes, principally the indifference of some leading Muhammadans and the long delay on the part of several in replying to the Committee's invitation, it was deemed advisable to postpone the Conference¹¹⁵ until February 1899, i.e. for more than one year. But the reasons given in the official communication of the National Mahomedan Association were not the real causes behind the postponement of the Congress. What Ameer Ali knew, but chose not to make public was that 'Sir Syed Ahmed Khan had advised the Moslems not to indulge in politics at all and it would not be easy to induce representatives from all parts of India to Meet'.¹¹⁶ The above view was confirmed by Syed Abid Hussain who categorically pointed to Sir Syed's opposition to Ameer Ali's call for an all India-based Muslim conference.¹¹⁷

It was not therefore, as Anil Seal suggested, that the proposed conference was planned 'as a supplement to the Muhammadan Educational Congress launched by Syed in 1886',¹¹⁸ The fact that within the space of a year of Sir Syed's foundation of the All-India Educational Conference (1886), Ameer Ali thought in terms of another all-India based Muhammadan conference, was perhaps one of the reasons behind the failure of the project. Moreover, it was yet another proof of the two principal leaders of the Muhammadan community failing to reconcile their differences while moving more or less along similar lines. The fact is that by the mid-eighties of the nineteenth century, Ameer Ali had emerged as an all-India leader of his co-religionists, and represented the only possible challenge to Sir Syed's position of unquestioned supremacy till then. In April 1884, Ali made representations on behalf of the Bombay Muslims for a reserved proportion of seats

on municipalities. In 1885, he was soliciting aid for a special college for the Muslims in Sind. And by 1886 it was clear to Government House that 'the Mohamedan National Association (representing the most advanced section of the Indian Mussalmans)...aims at serving as a bond of union for all Mussalmans throughout India.¹¹⁹ In view of these circumstances, it will perhaps not be an altogether improbable conjecture that there could have been a personality clash between the two leaders. Sir Syed with his commanding personality, well-established popularity and an entrenched position in an ever-growing Muslim public opinion was obviously in a better position to lead his co-religionists than the westernized Ameer Ali, who had alienated a large section of conservative Muslim opinion. Hence if Ameer Ali had to acquiesce before Syed Ahmad, it was not always because he chose to, but possibly because there was no other alternative under the circumstances. Whatever may have been the odds against Ameer Ali's proposed conference, it has been aptly remarked by an able historian, that 'had the plan of convening the conference matured, the history of the Muslim League would have been anticipated twenty years earlier'.¹²⁰ Peter Hardy can be hardly taken seriously when he says that Sir Syed and Ameer Ali 'were able to join hands across provincial boundaries and personal rivalries to form a communal political tie against the Bengali Hindu examination wallah'.¹²¹

Notwithstanding the opposition of the Patriotic Association, when the fourth Congress met at Allahabad in 1888, out of a total number of 1,248 delegates, 965 were Hindus and 221 were Muslims of whom four were from Bengal proper. The proportion of Muslim delegates went down from 18 per cent at the Allahabad sessions to 13½ per cent at the Bombay session which was held in the following year (254 out of 1,889). But at Allahabad three-fourths of the delegates came from the provinces (Bengal, the United Provinces and the Punjab) which contained six-sevenths of the Muhammadans of India, while in 1889 three-fourths came from the provinces (Madras, Bombay, the Central Province and Berar) which included one-seventh of the Muslim population. So the wonder was, remarked the organizers of the Congress, that 'despite the very small proportion of Mahomedans in the populations that chiefly made

up this Congress, we had so unexpectedly large a number as 254.¹²² If this was cited as an indication of a growing *reap-prochement* between the two communities in the Report of the Congress proceedings, paradoxically it was in this same session that a scheme of representative government on an elective basis was drafted. The issue of the population proportion minority clause raised the ill-starred spectre of communalism destined to create much acrimonious debate and political trouble in the future.

It is a matter of singular interest that throughout the decade of the nineties with the exception of the years 1890 and 1896, not a single Muslim from Bengal proper attended the Congress sessions.¹²³ It was no mere coincidence, but perhaps the actual reason, that in both these years, the Congress having been held at Calcutta, quite a few Muslims from Bengal proper attended. The supporters of the Congress both Hindus and Muslims theorized that an 'important section' of the Muslims held aloof from the movement under the 'mistaken impression' that it was disliked by the rulers, and that not to join such a movement, to denounce it, and to actually oppose it, was the surest passport to official favour and patronage. The abstention of the Muslims of Bengal proper should be viewed in the light of the unwavering stand maintained by the National Mahomedan Association towards the Congress. In 1894 another general meeting of the Association was held to consider the attitude of the Muslims of the Bengal Presidency towards the forthcoming Congress. The motion carried unanimously was that after duly considering all the arguments advanced in support of the Congress movement, the Association unhesitatingly affirmed that 'the movement is on the whole neither conducive to the general political welfare of the country, nor to the special interest of the Muhammadan community', and therefore the Association unanimously resolved to hold rigidly aloof from the propaganda and adopt such measures as might be necessary to protect the interests of the community. 'It further affirmed that the adhesion of any individual Muhammadan or Muhammadans must be regarded as his or their personal opinions and not those of the community in general.'¹²⁴

Moreover, on an all-India level Hindu-Muslim relations had considerably worsened during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This had been brought about by the *Suddhi* (reconversion of Hindus who had earlier embraced Islam) and the accompanying *Sangathan* (to effect the union of the Hindus and organise them for self-defence) movements, the *Go-rakshini* (cow-protection) campaign and the Urdu-Hindi controversy. Though these movements were not intentionally anti-Muslim in the beginning, yet by the close of the century the Muslims were convinced that their path lay in a different direction from that of the Hindus, and that they would have to take steps to safeguard their interests.¹²⁵ The pressure of Hindu extremism was too strong and since then the revivalism of the Hindus and the separatism of the Muslims directly reinforced each other. It was pointless to say that 'the intelligent and educated Mohamedans' were in favour of the Congress. On the contrary the Congress had to take account of the fact that the overwhelming majority of Muslims were against them. It therefore followed that the movement *ipso facto* ceased to be a general or national Congress.

In 1892 the Indian Councils Act was passed conceding the Congress demands to some extent. The Patriotic Association founded by Sir Syed had long become defunct. The *Bengalee* remarked in its columns that 'it was foredoomed to be a failure, as mere opposition to a great movement affords no sufficient incentive to human effort'.¹²⁶ On 30 December 1893, a meeting of influential Muslims was held at the house of Sir Syed to discuss the political situation of the Muslims and to consider the question of the formation of a political organization to place the Muslim point of view before the Government. The meeting felt the need of a wholly Muslim organization and accordingly the Mohammedan Anglo Oriental Defence Association was founded with its headquarters at Aligarh. This change of attitude and policy was particularly significant in the light of Sir Syed's earlier opposition to Ali's call for an all-India based Muslim conference. 'The main reason', according to Jain, 'for the foundation of the Defence Association was that the Muslims had failed in their opposition to the introduction of elective principles in India and

it was therefore essential for them to demand certain safeguards for Muslim interests...'.¹²⁷ The activities of the Defence Association during 1894-96 proved in the opinion of M. S. Jain that it was the true predecessor of the Muslim League. It asked for all those things which the Simla Deputation asked for later, in 1906.¹²⁸ But it has been shown earlier in this work that in Mahomed Yusuf's demand for separate representation for the Muslims as early as 1883, and in Ameer Ali's call for an all-India organization in 1887 to safeguard the constitutional rights of the Muslims, lay the seeds of Muslim separatist demand and organization.

By 1894, the Muslims of Bengal felt acutely the need of 'a good, strong representative body of their own men,' which should be capable of representing their grievances to the Government, 'unaffected by any personal fear or hope of individual advancement'.¹²⁹ Popular feeling ran high against the two existing organizations. The Central National Mahomedan Association was felt to be 'dandling [sic.] on with the consideration of almost all conceivable questions affecting the Mohammedan Community, with however, a minimum of result,'¹³⁰ the Mahomedan Literary Society on the other hand was considered 'to possess no *raison d'être*,'¹³¹ if it thought that it had done its duty. But the Muslims of the North-Western Provinces were by the close of the nineteenth century 'up and doing' under the leadership of Sir Syed. It was unfortunate that petty factions and jealousies prevented the Bengali Muslims from uniting and rallying under the banner of a common leader. Moreover though theoretically Sir Syed was the unquestioned leader of the Muslim community of India, yet one of his most vital limitations was that he did not ever realize the special necessity of bringing the Muslims of Bengal under his away. He might not have been consciously sectional in his appeals and efforts, but in effect the Muslims in and around the United Provinces were the chief beneficiaries of his activities. To cite a significant example, the All India Muhammadan Educational Conference of Sir Syed which started meeting since 1886 'busied itself primarily with the problems of the north Indian Muslims and only found time to come to Bengal thirteen years after the foundations'.¹³² The

crisis in Bengali Muslim leadership became particularly alarming with Ameer Ali's elevation to the Bench in 1890 (a post which he retained till 1904) which prevented him from taking any direct part in politics, and Abdul Latif's death in 1893. 'What we need Mr. Editor is not money but a proper leader... What we, at present need, want really is second Syed Amhed in Bengal,' cried out an anonymous Muslim gentleman in the columns of the *Moslem Chronicle*.¹³³ A second Syed Ahmad was obviously not forthcoming, but there did emerge a new group of Muslim intelligentsia during the closing decade of the nineteenth century, belonging mainly to the legal profession—men like Seraj-ul-Islam, Shams-ul-Huda, Abdur Rahim among others. Some of these educated Muslims in 1896 launched the Muhammadan Reform Association and appointed as its Secretary their more experienced senior Mahamed Yusuf. But the association failed to be any better than the existing organizations. Some Calcutta Muslim leaders about this time were being attracted, though not very strongly, by pan-Islamic ideas. Jamal-al-Din al-Afghani, the founder of a liberal religious movement, had visited the city in the early 1880s. He was sorely disappointed with the Muhammadans of Calcutta, who according to him were selfish and unpatriotic and were afraid of listening to him on account of the Government. Jamal-al-Din found Abdul Latif timid and the rest of the *maulavis* intensely ignorant. Of Ameer Ali he formed a poor opinion. 'There were many now,' confided Maulavi A.M., translator to the High Court, to W. C. Blunt, 'of his (Jamal-al-Din) way of thinking who held a middle position between the rival parties,'¹³⁴ i.e. between Abdul Latif and the conservative *maulavis* on the one hand and Ameer Ali and his coterie on the other, who remained 'outside the pale of Muhammadan Society.'¹³⁵

Meanwhile constitutional agitation on an all-India basis was moving apace, and in another direction indications were not wanting 'of some half-formed Machiavellian idea, that it would be an act of policy on the part of the Government, to play off what is called the "loyalty of the Muhammadans," against these natural and honourable aspirations of the people generally, which were mischievously characterized as "disaffection".' There were positive indications of both these trends in the

Anglo-Indian newspapers and journals, and in the policy-making of the bureaucracy. An article in the *Nineteenth Century* of December 1886, entitled 'The Loyalty of the Indian Mahomedans' may be cited as one of the many cases in point. It was a direct appeal to the Government to adopt the policy of governing the country by setting the two great communities against each other. It was a deliberate recommendation to the Government to exploit the backward condition of the Muhammadans, by using their 'loyalty' as a claim to preferential employment in the service of the State, and of opening to them 'the career of arms, high pay, high position, and honours.'¹³⁶ The *Times* contemptuously dubbed the National Congress as 'an unreal imitation of the English Caucus, and merely an affair of discontented place-seekers.' The refusal of the Muslims to endorse the Congress programme was cited as adding another to many proofs, that the bureaucracy must look to its Muhammadan subjects for the most sensible and moderate estimates of its policy.¹³⁷

The British bureaucracy in their conscious effort to divide and rule regarded political concession as the natural aspiration of the intelligentsia. At the same time, English civilians were bent on setting up a 'positive counterpoise' to the nationalist agitation. The economic and religious diversities of the country served as a lever in the hands of the Government to rally the landlords and the Muslims on their side. The latter groups, apprehensive of the increasing power and influence of the lawyers, newspaper editors and school masters, conveniently played into the hands of the imperialists. Notwithstanding the minority section of nationalist Muslims, the majority of them by the close of the nineteenth century, had seceded from the main current of nationalist agitation. The British Government in working out the successive stages of the scheme for self-government succeeded in accentuating differences where they already existed and in creating new ones where there were none. The two most diversely affected communities in the British period were the Hindus and the Muslims, and the Government exploited the issue till it became bitterly communal in the beginning of the twentieth century. It would make an interesting study to trace the minutiae of bureau-

cratic policy-making during this period.

After the second Congress session of 1886 (at Calcutta) was over, the Governor-General Dufferin in a letter to Lord Cross rejoiced at the 'excellent effect' that the meeting of the Indian Congress had, 'though not exactly in the direction its promoters anticipated.' He pointed out that the 'extravagant pretensions' that were embodied in the resolutions of that 'rather hystorical assembly, in which the more violent and silly of their numbers rule the roost,' have aroused 'the opposition and indignation both of the Mohammedan community and of the conservative section of society, which is both large and influential.' It was not the co-operation of the upper classes alone which Dufferin solicited. He encouraged the Muslims from the beginning to regard themselves as a distinct political entity in India. 'No doubt there was no official pressure on the Moslem community to keep aloof from the Congress. But the Government of India could not disclaim their share in strengthening a Moslem, as distinct from an Indian, political outlook.'¹³⁸ One consequence of Dufferin's activity on accentuating the separatist feeling among the Muslims of India, as he himself complacently acknowledged, was a recrudescence of communal rioting. 'The spread of education and improved prospects of public service, instead of bridging the gulf between the two communities, gradually transformed religious animosity to political rivalry among the educated classes.'¹³⁹ The appointment of the Civil Service Commission was also a step 'in the same unexpected direction,' wrote the Viceroy in a similar vein. The 'Baboo witnesses' who appeared before it were showing their hand so prematurely that the alarmed non-Baboo classes were beginning to see that 'under the ideal Baboo regime they would be completely left out in the cold.'¹⁴⁰ Against the background of this jubilation over dissension, the genuineness of the Viceroy's subsequent reply to the address from the inhabitants of Bengal on the occasion of his retirement, stood ludicrously exposed. Dufferin remarked that he 'would rather see the Europeans, Hindus and Muhammadans united in criticising the Government,' than that 'the British Government should ever seek to maintain its rule in India by fomenting race hatreds amongst its subjects.'¹⁴¹ Elsewhere, in a Minute

recorded on the Liberalization of Provincial Councils, Dufferin, referring to the Muhammadan defection, remarked that it looked as if the Muhammadans were rising in revolt against the ascendancy which they imagined a rival and less virile race was desirous of obtaining over them, while there were signs that the Native Princes, Magnates, and Landholders were becoming seriously alarmed at the thought of a small class of Barristers, Native Newspaper Editors, and University Students intervening between them and the just, impartial and powerful administration of the British Government.¹⁴²

The demand for representative Government had been definitely formulated during the Viceroyalty of Ripon. Lord Dufferin's Government found it necessary to take the Congress demand for reform of the Councils seriously, and initiated the discussion that resulted in the passing of the Indian Councils Act of 1892. The enlargement of the Councils and the recognition of the elective principle which followed in its wake were held to be justified by the accelerated spread of English education, by the increased employment of Indians in the actual administration of the country, and by the indubitable proof which they had given of their intellectual fitness for such employment. At the commencement of the period of which we are speaking, the Indian National Congress was little more than a 'speculative experiment in the application of European ideas to Indian political conditions.' But by 1891, it was recognized by Lord Lansdowne 'as representing in India what in Europe would be called the more advanced liberal party, as distinguished from the great body of conservative opinion which exists side by side with it.'¹⁴³ By 1888, Lord Dufferin endowed with instincts 'essentially liberal' as per his own claim, and upholding the view that the British Government ought to be 'a benevolent bureaucratic despotism for many a long year to come' felt that the time had come when the Congress 'if not stamped out soon' might 'readily become dangerous'.¹⁴⁴ On the other hand, the subject of the liberalization of the Provincial Councils was a matter which occupied the Viceroy's thoughts almost constantly during the years 1885 to 1888, i.e. coincidental or otherwise, since the year which witnessed the inauguration of the Congress move-

ment. With the assistance of a Committee composed of Aitchison, Chesney and Westland, a scheme was elaborated which though in the opinion of Dufferin would not satisfy the 'Democratic or Home Rule party in India' or the Radicals in England, would prove 'a wise, moderate and just concession, not to the clamour of the times, but to the changing circumstances of India'.¹⁴⁵ With a measure of this kind, Dufferin expected that a 'legitimate opportunity would be afforded of getting rid of the Congress, as well as of restricting the abuses of the Native Press.' Finding it unwholesome to breathe in a 'Bengalee political atmosphere' he hoped by granting this 'very small and restricted political privilege', 'to take the wind out of the sails of the Associations' and greatly weaken their importance.¹⁴⁶ What the Viceroy had in mind was to liberalize Sir Charles Wood's constitution by modifying the status of the Provincial Councils, introducing into them a larger, but not a predominating number of Native Members, who would be invested with nothing beyond the 'consultative, critical and suggestive powers'. 'We are expanding, enlarging, multiplying, but not radically changing' the system introduced by Sir Charles Wood, remarked Lord Dufferin.

An important consideration which arose in this connection and was destined to be the subject of much debate and disparity in the future, was that due provision should be made for the presence in both Divisions of the Chamber of a fair proportion of members drawn from the two great classes, Hindus and Muslims. In order to obviate the 'marked inequalities in the results of the election', it was thought necessary that the Government would have to occasionally use its reserve of nomination. The object aimed at was that the Hindu and Muslim members 'should bear to each other a numerical proportion approaching as nearly as may be thought desirable the proportion that Hindus bear to Mohammedans in the Provincial population.' Though the 'elective principle was adopted to a modified extent, yet it was the firm belief of the Viceroy that in India as it existed then no real "representation" of the people could be obtained and all that the bureaucracy was hoping to achieve was to place itself in contact with a large surface of Native opinion.'¹⁴⁷

With Dufferin's departure in the winter of 1888, the res-

possibility for executing into practice the reforms which were as yet in an embryonic stage, fell on the shoulders of Lord Lansdowne. The decade of the nineties exhibited a marked inclination on the part of the Viceroys and Secretaries of State to secure a fair distribution of the appointments between Muhammadans and Hindus, and proportionate representation of the two communities in the Councils. It was as if nurtured by a pronounced anti-Bengali feeling. Lord Cross, the Secretary of State for India during these crucial years, but for whom the Councils Act of 1892 'would never have (been) passed or even brought forward,' fully agreed with Sir Henry Maine who remarked as early as 1868 that 'there would be no more dangerous ingredient in the Council than a large number of educated Bengalee Nations.'¹⁴⁸ Lord Cross was as much against the western notion of election, which he considered unsuited to the Indian Empire, as he shared the eagerness of the Queen Empress that the Muhammadans as a class should secure a due share of representation. Hence it was but natural that the Secretary of State was alarmed at Dufferin's suggestion of applying the elective principle. But the Viceroy's suggestion was more actuated by shrewd diplomacy, as has been pointed out earlier, than genuine respect for constitutional Government in India. In a letter to Lord Lansdowne, Lord Cross categorically stated that though he was willing to add to the Councils, yet his as well as Lord Salisbury's difficulty lay in the principle of election. The primary reason cited for this was that the Muhammadans for a moment would not 'consent to be outvoted by the Hindoo. It is the justice of British rule which contents them.'¹⁴⁹

While the Secretary of State was busy underlining the fact that election ought to be omitted from the proposed scheme of reforms, in his numerous correspondence with the Viceroy, a petition on the same subject was addressed to Lord Cross by the Mahomedan Literary Society on 1 April 1890. The petitioners expressed satisfaction at the omission of any elective principle from the Councils Bill, inasmuch as owing to the peculiar religious and social circumstances of India, the country was not yet fit for the exercise of such privileges. It was their firm belief that 'should election form the basis of any portion of the contemplated legislation on the subject

of the Indian Councils, the Muhammadan community, though numbering some 50 millions, will be at the mercy of a strong and compact Hindu majority whose notions of right and expediency are so different in many vital points, from those entertained by the Muhammadans.' The petition further pointed out that even if the Muhammadans secured, by any system of election, a certain number of representatives, their numerical proportion, in view of their backwardness in regard to English education and political organization, would 'never be strong enough to ensure a due regard to their vital interests'. The practical effect thereof would be 'committing the interests of one community to the control of another.' Their suggestion, therefore, was to 'leave the responsible Government of India to make such selections for the several Councils in India, as under proper safeguards they may consider right and proper in the interests of the various nationalities which inhabited India.'¹⁵⁰

The general apprehension against the adoption of the elective system was that it might lead to the 'stereotyping of an elective constituency of a special and narrow type.' However, the electoral system was already admitted in the municipalities and district boards. Any project of reform in which the elective principle was wanting would have altogether failed to satisfy the educated classes and the large body of public opinion guided by it. This disappointment would have been doubly great, as owing to the publication of Dufferin's Minute in the *Bengalee*, it had become universally known that the late Viceroy and his Council were disposed to permit the election of some of the members of each Provincial Council.¹⁵¹ These were some of the valid considerations that weighed with Lord Lansdowne's adoption of the elective principle. But at the same time, Lord Lansdowne's Government in its despatch of 26 October 1892, described the Indian society as 'essentially a congeries of widely separated classes, races and communities, with divergencies of interests and hereditary sentiment which for ages have precluded common action or local unanimity.'¹⁵² It insisted that 'the representation of such a community could only be secured by assigning to each important class a member specially acquainted with its views.'¹⁵³ The principle of giving representation to the castes and religions of India was repeatedly asserted. 'It has been on the tongue and pen of every

Governor-General, including more particularly Lord Ripon, Lord Lansdowne, and Lord Minto,' remarked Sir William Lee-Warner in his proposed scheme for Representation of the Principal Communities of Indian Society.¹⁵⁴ For it was the natural tendency, as the Bombay Government pointed out, for the advocates of each particular class or interest to consider how their own advantage can best be furthered, and to overlook the wider aspects of the subject.

The above opinion was however, not confined to Englishmen alone, but was shared by a particular section of the Indians, inasmuch as the problem affected them. These views received striking independent confirmation from the debates in Parliament on the Indian Councils Bill which became law in 1892. In the Upper House Lord Ripon referred to the extreme difficulty of 'selecting men who represented the various classes of the community, and the various sections of opinion, as well as the various localities of India.' Lord Kimberley went on to emphasize the necessity of ascertaining the feelings of 'a most important body...the Mahommedans of India. If you were to be guided entirely by the Hindu popular opinion you would find yourself in great difficulty.' In the House of Commons the weightiest utterance was that of Gladstone who referred to the difficulty of introducing the elective principle 'in an Asiatic country like India...with such diversities of races, religions and pursuits.' To the principle thus affirmed by both Houses of Parliament Lord Lansdowne's Government endeavoured to give as wide a scope as was then possible in the regulations framed for the constitution of the Provincial Legislative Councils.

The foundations of representative Government were well and truly laid by the Act of 1892. When in 1893 the Councils were enlarged and the elective principle was introduced, an endeavour was made so to constitute the electorates that all the more important classes and interests should as far as possible be represented. The Muslims were specified as one of the groups thus to be represented. In the case of the Provincial Councils it was admitted that the results did not justify the expectations formed. These experiments in constitutional reform resulted in 'a monopoly of seats and not a representation of groups,' as Sir W. Lee-Warner pointed out. The statis-

tics from 1893 to 1906 showed the professional middle class holding 66.6 per cent of the elected seats, the landholders 5.5 per cent; European commercial members 24.1 per cent and the representatives of Indian commerce 1.9 per cent. No Muhammadan succeeded in obtaining a seat by election, and throughout the period the members elected by the district boards and municipalities belonged with one exception to the professional middle class.¹⁵⁵ The Muhammadans naturally pointed out that the reforms of 1892 paid no regard to the diversity of interests involved, and that territorial representation in so far as it was then introduced, placed a monopoly of voting power in the hands of the professional class.

In August 1893 a memorial was addressed by the Central National Mahomedan Association to the Viceroy on the subject of representation of Muhammadans in the Viceregal Council. In a spirit of loyalty it suggested such 'safeguards' as were deemed necessary 'for the protection of the interest of their community in the conflict of claims' that often arose in all important questions. The memorialists further pointed out that in the constitution of the electoral bodies with the privilege of nominating members for the Viceroy's Council, there was 'no chance of any Muhammadan being returned by any one of those bodies' and therefore the Muslims would have to depend entirely upon the sympathy of the Viceroy for their proper representation in Council. As the enlarged Council was to be composed of 16 additional members, the petitioners prayed that 'having regard to the importance of the community' which they represented it would be an act of justice to reserve three seats 'for the Muhammadans, in the Viceroy's Council.'¹⁵⁶ An analysis of the two memorials addressed to the Viceroy by the Mahomedan Literary Society and the Central National Mahomedan Association establishes the fact that the broad principles on which the subsequent Simla Deputation (1906) was based were anticipated more than a decade earlier in Bengal. The concept of the 'historical importance' of the Muslim community and the necessity of 'adequate safeguards' for the protection of their interests from the 'mercy of a strong and compact Hindu majority' were the two main points in the memorials which indicated the future line of Muslim political activism.

On the other hand, the proposal in connection with the special representation of the Muhammadans was, as a rule, adversely criticized by the Hindus who regarded it as an attempt to set up one religion against the other and thus to create a counterpoise to the influence of the educated middle class. There were, however, some Hindus who recognized the expediency of giving special representation to the Muhammadan community, just as there were some Muhammadans who were opposed to the idea of communal representation. The end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries witnessed a prolonged battle in the press and on the platform over this issue, and the attempt by the Government to bolster up the Muhammadan case led a Hindu-Muslim confrontation in its worst form. Lord Minto along with the members of his Committee believed that the 'soundest solution' of the problem was to be found in supplying 'the requisite counterpoise' to the excessive influence that the elective system gave to the legal profession in the Provincial Councils. 'The result was the creation of an additional electorate recruited from the landed and monied classes and from the Mahamedans.'¹⁵⁷ It may be stated that the Act of 1892 containing the elective principle on communal and sectional considerations sowed the seeds of separate representation. 'The Act of 1909 extended that principle. The change was one of degree and not of kind,' as Sachin Sen has aptly remarked.¹⁵⁸

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²⁸ The National Mahomedan Association founded by Ameer Ali is generally regarded as the premier political organization of the Muslims. But I have contended that the Mahomedan Association founded in Calcutta in 1855 can be more appropriately regarded as the premier political organization of the Muslim community. Vide Chapter IV.

²⁹ Ameer Ali, *Memoirs*, op. cit. p. 540.

³⁰ F. B. Bradley-Birt, *Twelve Men of Bengal in the Nineteenth Century* (Calcutta, 1910), p. 94.

- ³¹ Ibid. p. 94.
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- ³⁸ *Triennial Report of the Central National Mahomedan Association of India* (Calcutta, 1888), p. 1.
- ³⁹ Anil Seal, op. cit. p. 312.
- ⁴⁰ B. B. Majumdar, op. cit. p. 225. The author gives a list of 50 branches as they existed in 1888.
- ⁴¹ Vide Appendix F.
- ⁴² The President, Nawab Ameer Ali, for example, on a particular occasion, deemed it necessary that the Central National Mahomedan Association should act in concert with the British Indian Association and other cognate institutions. Vide *Tracts, Proceedings of the General Meeting of the National Mahomedan Association held on 20 October 1878*.
- ⁴³ Vide Chapter V, Memorial of National Mahomedan Association to the Marquis of Ripon, 1882.
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- ⁶³ *Abstract of the Progs. of the Council of the Governor-General of India*, vol. XXII, pp. 19-20.
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- ⁶⁹ Ram Gopal, op. cit. p. 49.
- ⁷⁰ Pirzada, op. cit. p. xx.
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⁸⁷ *Ibid.* Quoted from the *Indian Mirror*.

⁸⁸ *Proceedings of the Public Service Commission*, vol. VI (Calcutta, 1887), Evidence of Abdul Latif, 1 March 1887, p. 264.

⁸⁹ *Report of the Fourth Indian National Congress* (Allahabad, 1888), p. 16. 5A

⁹⁰ Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi, *The Deoband School and the Demand for Pakistan* (Bombay, 1963), p. 38.

⁹¹ Mehta and Patwardhan, *op. cit.* p. 24.

⁹² *Report of the Second Indian National Congress*, Calcutta, 1886, quoted in footnote, p. 9.

⁹³ *Ibid.* p. 10.

⁹⁴ *The Statesman*, 28 December 1886.

⁹⁵ *The Statesman*, 30 December 1886.

⁹⁶ *The Statesman*, 25 December 1886.

⁹⁷ *The Statesman*, 28 December 1886.

⁹⁸ *The Statesman*, 29 December 1886.

⁹⁹ Please note the change in the spelling of the name.

¹⁰⁰ Itaelics mine.

¹⁰¹ Not underlined in the original.

¹⁰² *The Statesman*, 30 December 1886.

¹⁰³ Tyabji to Amir Ali, 3 December 1887, *Tyabji Papers*.

¹⁰⁴ Tyabji to Syed Ahmed, 18 February 1888, *Tyabji Papers*.

¹⁰⁵ *Report of the Third Indian National Congress*. Madras, 1887. Appendix I.

¹⁰⁶ S. N. Banerjea, *op. cit.* p. 108.

¹⁰⁷ *The Bengalee*, 10 November 1888.

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Pirzada, p. xxiv from Syed Ahmad Khan, *The Present State of Indian Politics*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁹ Shan Mohammad, *Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan* (Bombay, 1972), p. 213.

¹¹⁰ *Source Material, Bombay Government Records*, vol. II, p. 70, quoted in Pirzada, *op. cit.* p. xxiv (Italics mine).

¹¹¹ B. B. Majumdar, *op. cit.* p. 229.

¹¹² Rafiuddin Ahmed, *op. cit.* p. 164.

¹¹³ W. C. Blunt, *op. cit.* p. 127.

¹¹⁴ *Triennial Report*.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ B. B. Majumdar, *op. cit.* p. 227.

¹¹⁷ Syed Abid Hussain, *op. cit.* p. 38.

¹¹⁸ Anil Seal, *op. cit.* pp. 331-32.

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Anil Seal, *op. cit.* pp. 312-313.

- ¹²⁰ B. B. Majumdar, op. cit. p. 227.
- ¹²¹ Peter Hardy, op. cit. p. 125.
- ¹²² *Report of the Fifth Indian National Congress*, Bombay, 1889.
- ¹²³ Vide Appendix G.
- ¹²⁴ *The Mohammedan Observer*, November 1894.
- ¹²⁵ S. Abid Husain, op. cit. pp. 212-13.
- ¹²⁶ *Bengalee*, 8 December 1894.
- ¹²⁷ M. S. Jain, op. cit. pp. 215-26.
- ¹²⁸ Ibid. p. 128.
- ¹²⁹ *Mohammedan Observer*, 30 August 1894.
- ¹³⁰ *Mohammedan Observer*, 27 December 1894.
- ¹³¹ Ibid.
- ¹³² Raffiuddin Ahmed, op. cit. p. 152.
- ¹³³ *Moslem Chronicle*, 2 April 1898, quoted in Sufia Ahmad, op. cit. p. 207.
- ¹³⁴ W. C. Blunt, op. cit. p. 104.
- ¹³⁵ Ibid. p. 104.
- ¹³⁶ W. H. Gregory, 'The Loyalty of the Indian Mahomedans', in *Nineteenth Century*, December 1886, p. 894.
- ¹³⁷ *Report of the Second Indian National Congress*, Appendix V (Comments of the Press), quoted from the *Times* in the *Reis and Rayyet*.
- ¹³⁸ S. Gopal, op. cit. p. 160.
- ¹³⁹ Ibid. p. 159.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Cross Papers*, Reel No. 4, Dufferin to Cross, 1 February 1887, Calcutta.
- ¹⁴¹ Ibid. Reel No. 5.
- ¹⁴² Ibid. Reel No. 5, *Enclosures* No. 2, Minute by Lord Dufferin on Liberalization of Provincial Councils, November 1888.
- ¹⁴³ Morley Papers, Reel No. 1, File entitled 'India Councils Reforms' October 1906—August 1907.
- ¹⁴⁴ *Cross Papers*, Reel No. 5.
- ¹⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁶ Ibid. Reel No. 4.
- ¹⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁸ Ibid. *Selection of papers in Indian Legislative Councils*, Calcutta, 1886, p. 131.
- ¹⁴⁹ *Lansdowne Papers*, Reel No. 2 : from Cross to Lansdowne, 18 January 1889.
- ¹⁵⁰ *Home Deptt. Progss. April* 1890. Nos. 150-153.
- ¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² *Morley Collection*, Reel No. 1.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ No. 21 of 1908, Government of India Home Dept. Public. para 35,
Morley Collection.

¹⁵⁶ *Home Deptt. Public A*, October 1893, Nos. 51-53.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Sachin Sen, *op. cit.* p. 57.

Entente and Alienation

The Indian Councils Act of 1892 brought home to the Muslims that if Government policy was moving towards a representative or responsible form of Government, it was high time for them to do something to safeguard their interests. As a minority community they had not been able to secure their due share under the new elective system. Sir Syed's foundation of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental Defence Association at Aligarh in 1893 showed 'signs of a change in his attitude towards Muslim political association'.¹ From the point of view of the nationalists, the instalment of reforms contained in the Act of 1892 did not satisfy the Congress either, which gave vent to its disappointment at the Lahore session in 1893. The failure of the policy of 'prayer and petition' so long pursued by the moderate nationalists 'involved on its critics the search for an indigenous model' of agitation. A generation of Indian leaders in the last decade of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth centuries, more aptly described as the extremists, were in the grip of an idea, 'at once religious and political'. The extremists discovered in the concept of *dharmarajya* as preached by Srikrishna and the Hindu *rashtra* as evolved by Shivaji, a symbolic antithesis to the materialist and scientific world-outlook of a western type. But 'prisoners of their own interpretation of the Hindu religion', the extremists failed to understand the Muslim mind. The celebration of the *Ganapati* and Shivaji festivals in Maharashtra started by Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1844-1920) and of the *Sakti* cults in Bengal, and the activities of the Arya Samajists in north India served in no small measure to rouse the communal consciousness among the Hindus during the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

In Bengal the development of the extremist creed involved 'a rejection of Bankimchandra's rationalist and Vivekananda's liberal universal interpretation of Hinduism ... and could not but end in an explosion that was anti-Western.'² The resurgence of the pro-Hindi agitation and its success in 1900 under the patronage of Sir Anthony MacDonnel, the Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces, and the sporadic outbursts of communal riots in connection with the *Go-rakshini* movements launched by the Hindus created fear, suspicion and ill-will in the Muslim mind. The annual meetings of the Muhammadan Educational Conference established by Sir Syed in 1886 gave the Muslims of the different provinces, during the close of the century, an opportunity to visualize themselves as an all India issue. Since the Conference met at Calcutta in 1899, there had grown up a closer co-operation between the Bengali Muslims and the promoters of the Aligarh movement.³ The creation of the new Muslim majority province of Eastern Bengal and Assam after the partition of 1905 provided the Muslims of Bengal with that vested interest which they needed to associate politically with the upper-class Muslims of the United Provinces; and the latter on their part created the impression that there was 'a Muslim political interest uniting the Muslims of the minority and the majority provinces.'⁴ This growing interprovincial Muslim unity was simultaneously provided with 'that popular subsoil they needed for established growth in an elective system.'⁵ The *Go-rakshini* movements of the last two decades of the century stirred the religious feelings of the Muslim artisan and shop-keeping classes in the small towns of the Punjab and of the United Provinces. The decision of a majority section of the Muslims to hold aloof from the Congress against this background, was fraught with momentous consequences for the future. 'It gave them an incentive not to hold aloof from each other but to move towards genuine inter-regional alliances.'⁶ It was only at this stage that Muslim attitudes towards an all-India movement began to take shape. Until then their developments had been dictated primarily by local and sectional needs. The British policy from Lansdowne to Curzon helped the crystallization of Muslim separate identity on the one hand, and the extremist creed of the radical section of the Hindu intelligentsia, on the other.

The period 1892 to 1909 was important for several administrative acts and changes, many of which were associated with the name of Lord Curzon (1899-1904). The keynote of these changes was centralization and officialization of such popular institutions as the local bodies and the universities. The distrust of Indians and the disbelief in their ability and honesty culminated in the Official Secrets Act (which was condemned as 'unnecessary and oppressive') and the abolition of the competitive Test, substituting official nomination for appointment according to merit. An inexorable quest for efficiency was outlined irrespective of consequences.⁷ The Viceroy himself frankly confessed: 'I am neither to be wheedled nor frightened into making political concessions... all my policy and my acts tend to rivet the British rule more firmly on to India and to postpone the longed-for day of emancipation. I am an Imperialist, and Imperialism is fatal to all their hopes. I hold the scales with exasperatingly even hand, and this is the last thing that they desire: they want the frank partiality of a Ripon.'⁸ When the Municipality Act was passed in 1899, Curzon was criticized for what was believed to be 'the summary suppression of the representative element.' In the official circles however, it was felt that 'if government had not retained the power of nominating one-third on the General Committee, there would certainly have been no Mahomedan and probably no Eurasian on it.' In the opinion of W. R. Bright, Chairman of the Calcutta Corporation, the agitation against the measure was led by the educated Hindu, 'in order to stop his predominance being taken from him.' It was significant that the Chairman had seen 'no opposition to the Bill proclaimed by the Mahomedan papers.' As regards the resignation of a Muhammadan elected Commissioner, it was pointed out that 'he wanted to resign *for other reasons*, and thought this a good opportunity for retiring with dignity.'⁹ The talk about the extinction of Local Self-Government in Calcutta in connection with the Municipality Act was regarded by Curzon as a 'farce' and the resignation of the 28 elected commissioners as 'a mere display of petulance.'

If left alone to develop upon the present lines, the Indian Universities, in the opinion of Curzon, 'will before long develop into nurseries of discontented characters and stunted brains.'¹⁰

The Viceroy felt that in Calcutta in particular, university education was developing into 'a potential political instrument, wielded by ill-educated vakils.'¹¹ Therefore, 'to relieve it of many of the abuses' with which it was over-grown notably in Bengal, the general object of Raleigh's University Commission in the opinion of Curzon was 'to brace up and purify higher education.' In Bengal a fierce agitation followed in the wake of Raleigh's University Commission Report. 'The Native newspapers have bubbled over in characteristic style,' remarked Curzon and his name was 'loudly hissed as the author of the doom of higher education in India.' But Syed Hosain Bilgrami (later appointed a member of the Council of the Secretary of State for India) and other Muslim leaders of Calcutta lent their support to the recommendations of the University Commission. Abul Kasem, the editor of the *Mussalman*, a man well-known for his pro-Congress zeal throughout Bengal, remarked that the former have done a great wrong and injury to the cause of Indian education in general and Muhammadan education in particular. The truth of this statement was 'amply justified' in view of the University Act, the Regulations and connected events, in the opinion of another Muslim paper, the *Muslim Patriot*.¹²

Almost every notable measure of Curzon's administration was directed against the Bengalis, and there is no gainsaying the fact that the Partition of Bengal was 'the veritable straw that broke the camel's neck'. As against the usual trend of blaming Curzon squarely for this 'administrative blunder' it may be pointed out that Curzon's policy 'was neither entirely his own nor too abrupt a departure'. One of the Viceroy's contemporaries and the first Lieutenant-Governor of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam recorded in his 'personal experiences' that it was during Curzon's absence on leave to England that 'a still more extensive dismemberment was elaborated in the Government of India Secretariat...'¹³ Among later scholars, Dr Amales Tripathi has drawn attention to the estrangement between the bureaucracy and the Bengali intelligentsia for over half a century preceding Curzon, and also to the facts that the solution of a Partition had been suggested as early as the time of Lawrence and that the top-ranking civilians were as responsible as Curzon for executing

the measure. But in the ultimate stage, 'the indifference of the Secretary of State was only slightly less culpable than Curzon's flamboyance for setting Bengal ablaze.'¹⁴ As a matter of fact, six years before his appointment as Viceroy of India, Curzon had been initiated into the prevailing anti-Bengali, anti-Hindu and anti-Congress philosophy of the British Government. If this formed the psychological background of the Partition, there was also an administrative background.¹⁵ It was for long recognized that Bengal was far too big for the charge of any single man, and proposals to reduce the burden were made, 'some successfully, the majority unsuccessfully, at different periods during the last quarter of a century.'¹⁶ As a matter of fact, it is interesting to note that as early as the reign of Ghiyasuddin Tughlak Shah, the Bengal Muslim kingdom had grown so 'extensive and unwieldy' that Bihar was separated, and Bengal itself for purposes of convenient administration was divided into three different sections, viz. (a) *Diyar-i-Sunargaon*, comprising Eastern Bengal, (b) *Diyar-i-Satgaon*, comprising Western Bengal, and (c) *Diyar-i-Lakhnauti* comprising Northern and Central Bengal.¹⁷ This state of things however, did not last long. Subsequently, when Akbar came to the throne, Bengal was again united with Bihar and Orissa and was annexed to the Mughal Empire.

Without going into the intricate details of the partition scheme, it has been deemed more appropriate for the purpose of the present study to bring out on the one hand, the anti-Bengali, anti-Congress and anti-Hindu bias of Curzon and the top civilians, permeating the whole scheme from its conception to execution; and on the other, the Muslim and Hindu attitudes of approval or disapproval of the measure. The scheme of the Partition passed through several stages and at every stage it was gradually expanded till at last it got its final form dividing Bengal proper into two halves. A careful analysis of state papers, proceedings of the Council and the private and confidential correspondences between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State shows unmistakably, in the opinion of Kalpana Bishui, that 'political considerations' ultimately overruled the authorities concerned in India, 'in brushing aside all other alternative schemes for the better administration of Bengal and in sticking to their plan of dividing the Bengali-speaking people into two

distinct halves.¹⁸ More a plan of Fraser and Risley, the first scheme of Partition, published as Risley Paper on 3 December 1903, 'was a counter-blast to Extremism.'¹⁹ Sir Andrew Fraser (the last Lieutenant-Governor of United Bengal) was convinced that certain districts of Bengal had become 'a hotbed of the purely Bengali movement, unfriendly if not seditious in character,' which should be immediately scotched. Sir Herbert Risley, Home Secretary to the Government of India, believed that 'Bengal united is a power. Bengal divided will pull several different ways. That is what the Congress leaders feel: their apprehensions are perfectly correct and they form one of the great merits of the scheme . . . It is not altogether easy to reply in a despatch which is sure to be published without disclosing the fact that in this scheme . . . one of our main objects is to split up and thereby to weaken a solid body of opponents to our rule.' The eastern districts would then be freed from 'the pernicious influence of Calcutta' and their Muslim population would get a juster deal.²⁰

The first scheme of Partition published as Risley paper on December 3 1903 was denounced by the Congress of the same year as 'preposterous'. It was destined to affect the unity of India and jeopardize communal amity. There was 'a prodigious outcry' in Bengal against a scheme which would deprive the Bengali educated classes of the new province, of the privileges of possessing a Legislative Council, a Board of Revenue and the High Court at Calcutta, along with the loss of business profits, educational and financial advantages and historical associations. Last but not the least, social difficulties would be coupled with linguistic deterioration and a lower standard of administration would be substituted for a higher one. But, for Curzon, the turmoil in Bengal was 'mainly of an artificial description.' In the hundreds of articles and letters that he read upon the subject, he was not able to find 'one single line of argument.' There was 'nothing but rhetoric and declamation.'²¹ An almost exasperated Curzon began to 'weary of attempting anything in the nature of a positive administrative reform in a country where so few people will ever look ahead, where public opinion is so unstable and ill-informed, and where sentiment overrides almost every other consideration...'²² In a subsequent note dated 14 February 1904, Curzon looked upon

the opposition of the educated classes 'largely based upon interested motives' as 'natural and reasonable enough.' But to him the question was how far their personal interest and feelings should be allowed to prevail against general administrative considerations of importance.²³ Three days later, in a letter to the Secretary of State, the Viceroy was more outspoken about his real intention. He pointed out that the Bengalis 'who like to think themselves a nation,' were bound to resent a scheme which would interfere with their dream 'of a future when the English will have been turned out, and Bengali Babu will be installed in Government House, Calcutta.' 'If we are weak enough to yield to their clamour now, we shall not be able to dismember or reduce Bengal again, and you will be cementing and solidifying, on the eastern flank of India a force already formidable and certain to be a source of increasing trouble in the future.'²⁴ In course of his memorable tour of Eastern Bengal in February 1904, Curzon suddenly elaborated a much wider version of the Risley plan. The Congress which saw in the division of Bengal a weakening of Bengali influence registered its protest again in 1904. In his letter to Brodrick dated 2 February 1905, Curzon underlined his political motive behind the Partition. The Viceroy remarked that Calcutta was the centre from which political agitation percolated throughout the whole of India, and the 'wirepullers' who all resided there were indeed sometimes not without serious influence on the Government of India. Hence any measure 'that would divide the Bengali speaking population; that would permit independent centres of activity and influence to grow up; that would dethrone Calcutta from its place as the centre of successful intrigue, or that would weaken the influence of the lawyer class, who have the entire organization in their hands, is intensely and hotly resented by them.'²⁵ The Viceroy's Calcutta University Convocation address (1905) which cast aspersions on the Indian national character and on their sacred literature was a glaring manifestation of his anti-Bengali prejudice. Before the final despatch on Partition secured the assent of the Secretary of State, Brodrick wished Curzon to consider a 'practicable alternative scheme', in view of the furore excited by Curzon's proposals. But this was rejected outright by the Viceroy as 'absolutely impracticable.' Among the several objec-

tions to the alternative scheme mentioned by Curzon the one which was particularly significant in this context was that 'it would tend to consolidate the Bengali element by detaching it from outside factors, and would produce the very effect that we desire to avoid.'²⁶ How strong this particular motive was behind the Partition scheme came out years later in an official acknowledgement of the issue. In a letter to Crewe, the Secretary to State, Hardinge the then Viceroy confessed, that while the need for administrative relief was genuine, 'the desire to aim a blow at the Bengalis overcame other considerations in giving effect to that laudable object.'²⁷

Curzon's anti-Congress attitude and the anti-Partition agitation sponsored by the Congress helped to stimulate each other in a marked degree. 'My policy ever since I came to India has been to reduce the Congress to impotence, ... by never in the smallest degree truckling to its leaders or holding any communion with the unclean things . . .' The more the Congress trumpeted its opposition to the Partition scheme, the more the Viceroy was convinced that 'the best guarantee of the political advantage of our proposal is its dislike by the Congress party.'²⁸ The Viceroy refused to listen to 'a stale rehash of belated cries and obsolete platitudes coming from untaught and unteachable Congress leaders.' The 'very hysteria of the Congress and the Bengali leaders was proof that his bureaucracy was on the right track, that the partition of Bengal was politically desirable.'²⁹

The creation of a Muslim majority province on the flank of Bengal had been long recognized as a political necessity. As early as 1896 W. B. Oldham, the Commissioner of the Chittagong Division, was the only officer who foresaw the political advantages of the formation of a province of Eastern Bengal with Dacca, or perhaps even Chittagong as its capital. He hoped that 'it would unite the most important part of the Muhammadan population of Eastern India under a system, the benefits of which for Muhammadans have, in the case of Sylhet and elsewhere, been proved.'³⁰ Subsequently the argument for Partition was formulated for Curzon by three civilians—Andrew Fraser, Bamfylde Fuller, Chief Commissioner of Assam, and Sir Herbert Risley.³¹ Curzon fell in with these suggestions and proceeded 'to build the new province on the

foundation of communalism.' A loan of 100,000 at nominal interest was promised to Nawab Salimullah Khan of Dacca, 'a influential zamindar with a long purse and a great following.' In return the Nawab was able to rally a huge assemblage of Muslims to welcome the Viceroy's plan for a Muslim province. In February 1904, Curzon set out on his historic sojourn of Eastern Bengal 'to ascertain from enquiry the trend of local opinion.' But the explanations contained in Risley's letter of 23 December 1903 and in the Viceroy's speeches during his tour in Eastern Bengal, showed that 'the real design of the Government of India was to create a new province in which Eastern Bengal would have an influential and prominent part.'³² The Viceregal party arrived at Dacca on 18 February and were the guests of the Nawab of Dacca whose allegiance to the proposed measures was by then secured. The Viceroy, in course of his speech, stated that as a proposal was put forward which would make Dacca the centre and possibly the capital of a new and self-sufficing administration, which would give to the people of these districts, by reason of their numerical strength and their superior culture, the preponderating voice in the province so created, 'which would invest the Mohamedans in Eastern Bengal with a unity which they have not enjoyed since the days of the old Mussulman Viceroys and Kings, ... is it not transparent, Gentlemen, that you must be the head and heart of any such new organism, instead of the extremities, and do you really mean to be so blind to your own future as to repudiate the offer ?'³³

The formation of an eastern province foreshadowed in a series of speeches delivered by the Viceroy in reply to public addresses during his tour of East Bengal was claimed by the Government of India to have emanated from public discussion and public opinion rather than from the Government itself.³⁴ The Lieutenant-Governor Sir Andrew Fraser in his speech of 8 August 1905 at Malda went further to suggest that he had 'strong evidence' that there were many in the districts (both Hindus and Muhammadans) which were to be transferred who saw the measure as one that was 'entirely to their advantage.'³⁵ But what the Lieutenant-Governor deliberately chose not to disclose was that there was also evidence of 'spontaneous expression' of Muhammadan disapproval of the Partition. As a

matter of fact, when the proposals of Partition were first published, Hindu, Muslim and Anglo-Indian (with the single dissentient voice of the *Indian Daily News*) opinion were unanimous in their denunciation of the scheme. *The Standard* remarked that the 'Europeans joined with the Natives in dissenting from the scheme, and the most loyal and conservative Mohammedan noblemen condemned it as unreservedly as the least responsible editor of a vernacular newspaper.'³⁶ The *Moslem Chronicle* representing the educated section of the Muslim community wrote in its editorial (9 January 1904) that it could not recollect that there had been in the discussion of public questions ever before 'so much unanimity of voice as that which is raising the shouts of protest against the proposed partition of Bengal.'³⁷ Articulate Bengali Muslim opinion did not with one accord accept British views of the Muslims' own best interests. Like the Hindu lawyers, Muslim legal practitioners attached to the Calcutta courts feared the loss of briefs. The Central National Mahomedan Association doubted the wisdom of the partition. And the family of the Nawab of Dacca was divided in its attitude. After the Viceroy's visit to East Bengal the *Moslem Chronicle* charged on 19 August 1905, in the article 'Reflections on the Partition', that Curzon's motive was too transparent to elude the eyes of the Muhammadans; that a bait was laid 'to enlist the sympathy' of the Muhammadans; and to 'disarm' their opposition towards the Partition. Risley added strength to the aforesaid argument. The constant efforts of the Congress wire-pullers to induce the leading Muhammadans to submit to their influence were according to the Home Secretary defeated mainly by the influence of the Dacca Nawab. 'If Dacca is made the capital of the new province, these chances of capturing the Bengal Muhammadans will become still more remote.'³⁸

But when the enlarged scheme of a self-contained separate province was made public, the majority of the educated section of the Muslims and a big section of the Muslim gentry under Nawab Salimullah soon changed their views and became enthusiastic supporters of the partition. The bureaucracy wished the Muslims to understand that the partition would be a boon to them, and their special difficulties would receive greater atten-

tion from the new administration, and that Dacca, at one time a Muhammadan capital, would cease to be 'a shadow of its former self.' As the bureaucracy noted in a carefully worded assessment, this blatant propaganda helped the authorities in their endeavour to change 'the attitude of the residents in the districts concerned,' i.e. the Muhammadans, towards the proposals.³⁹ The joint address of the District Boards and the Municipalities accepted partition as inevitable, and pleaded with the Government to include some other districts in addition to Dacca, Mymensingh and the Chittagong Division in the scheme of the transfer. The Nawab and the Dacca officials sought to palm it off as one which had the sanction of the representatives of the people. Of the nine men composing the address committee six were officials and the Nawab's men, and only three representing the three sub-divisions of the district of Dacca. These three members recorded their dissent and the address was approved and passed by the majority who were either officials or the Nawab's men.⁴⁰ As a result popular conviction gained ground that the local authorities of the Dacca Division with the help of the Nawab Bahadur sought to secure a so-called popular support to this view. With his influence and status among his co-religionists, Salimullah's emergence as a pro-partitionist fulfilled the bureaucratic design of weakening the base of the anti-partition agitation. The oppositionists of the measure for obvious reasons characterized the Nawab's efforts as 'suicidal'. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* referring to Curzon's Dacca speech remarked that the Viceroy's 'utterances have chilled the people and dashed their hopes to the ground.' And his inquiries about public opinion were 'a fraudulent sugar-coating of a bitter pill.'⁴¹ There could be no two opinions about bureaucratic intentions behind the Partition move. On the one hand, the Government wished to concentrate in the new province 'the typical Mohammedan of Bengal and constitute the city of Dacca the natural capital of such an aggregation.' On the other, it wished to cripple uniform development by fostering the growth of local aspirations and ideals in the creation of such centres among the Muhammadans at Dacca, among the inhabitants of Bihar at Patna and among the Oriyas at Cuttack.⁴²

A perusal of the official correspondence of the Bengal

civilians particularly of the Eastern districts, before and after Curzon's visit in February 1904, indicated that some of the top-ranking officials had suggested the formation of a mainly Muhammadan province where the Muslims would obtain a greater share of the Government's attention. H. Savage, Commissioner of the Dacca Division, W. B. Thomson, Magistrate of Mymensingh, R. W. Carlyle, Officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal, among others, more or less agreed that the Muslims 'under existing conditions do not receive the same consideration as the Hindus.' Therefore 'it may confidently be expected that if a province be formed,' as indicated, 'the Muhammadans who will form the vast bulk of the population will receive greater attention than they now do, and that the change will lead to an amelioration of their condition.'⁴³ The Commissioners of the Dacca Division observed that 'the Mussalmans, who form the great mass of the population, would have education offered to them in their vigorous mother tongue, Bengali, unhampered by the Sanskrit tendencies of the Hindus, who up to now have controlled and practically monopolized education in Bengal, or by the few educated men of their own religion, who have shut their eyes to facts and persuaded or tried to persuade themselves and others that the vernacular of the Eastern Bengal Mussalman is Urdu.'⁴⁴

'The revised scheme' of partition, remarked Surendranath Banerjea, 'was conceived in secret, discussed in secret, and settled in secret, without the slightest hint to the public Indeed, so complete was the lull after Lord Curzon's visit to East Bengal before the storm actually burst, that the idea gained ground that the project of a partition had been abandoned.'⁴⁵ The reason behind this secrecy was quite clear. 'The more we say, the greater will be the anger and commotion,' noted the Viceroy. 'It is useless to attempt to persuade Bengal. The *fait accompli* is the only argument that will appeal to them.'⁴⁶ The British Government published the papers on partition (after judicious pruning) on 10 October 1905, against Curzon's opposition, and the scheme was given effect to on 16 October. The man who was chosen to carry through the partition of Bengal was Bamfylde Fuller (1854-1935). In recommending him as the first Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal Curzon remarked: 'He is marked out as incomparably the

best candidate by his present position and abilities.⁴⁷ It is ironical indeed that only a year later, the Secretary of State Morley, writing to Minto, pointed out that the partition business had been badly handled 'from start to finish' and that Fuller was 'exactly the man worst fitted for such a post,' whose temperament crowned the original blunder.⁴⁸

The most important effect of the Partition of Bengal from the nationalist view-point was that public life in India, particularly in Bengal, gained a tremendous accession of strength. But at the same time, the creation of the new province of East Bengal and Assam saw the 'birth of public opinion amongst the Muhammadans.'⁴⁹ The fact that the Muhammadan population was thoroughly aroused introduced a new factor into the history of the new Province which was expected to prove most useful.⁵⁰ It would have been a relatively simple issue if the anti-Partition agitation could be characterized as a denominational affair in terms of Hindu support for and Muslim protest against the movement. But from the very beginning, the situation was rendered more complex by the cross-currents of opinions and activities inasmuch as genuine feelings as well as the vested interests of a section of both the communities were bound to be affected by a division of the province. The Central National Mahomedan Association of Calcutta was perhaps the first among several Muslim *anjumans* (associations) to register its protest against the proposed partition. In reply to a letter from the Judicial Department dated 16 January 1904, inviting its opinion on the proposed partition, the Committee of the Association said that a readjustment of the territorial limits of Bengal, either on the smaller or the larger scale suggested in the letter, was neither necessary nor desirable.⁵¹ It further continued that the people of the Chittagong Division of Dacca and Mymensingh, looked to Calcutta for inspiration and guidance. Therefore 'even assuming the existence of certain administrative conveniences, they are far outweighed by more important considerations to the country.'⁵² A public meeting held at Calcutta on 18 March 1904, under the chairmanship of Raja Peary Mohun Mookerjee of Uttarpara recorded its 'respectful but firm protest' against the partition proposals which had given rise to an agitation unparalleled in the history of Bengal. What was particularly significant was that the anti-

partition Resolution that was adopted at this meeting and was forwarded to the Government of India contained the names of four prominent Muslims of Bengal, viz., Nawab Syed Ameer Hussain, Nawab Syed Abdus Sobban, Maulvi Mahomed Yusuf Khan Bahadur and Maulvi Shamsul Huda.⁵³ The memorial forwarded by the Bengal Landholders' Association on 1 March 1904 stated that with 'the exception of perhaps of an interested few, there is no divergence of opinion between Hindus and Muhammadans on this question, and . . . that there may be personal interests at stake, if individuals are found to support the proposal which has been so widely condemned.'⁵⁴

There can be no denying the fact that the Partition of Bengal excited very strong feelings in the Bengali community, comprising particularly a very considerable part of the educated classes, and especially in Calcutta, practically the whole of the Indian Bar. In the opinion of the bureaucracy however, the feelings aroused were partly sentimental, based on a vague apprehension that the Bengali people would be divided into two. But on more substantial grounds the Hindus in particular felt that they would cease to enjoy a monopoly of Government jobs in the newly created province of Eastern Bengal. There they would also have to contend against a strong Muslim element in the population, and Calcutta would have a rival in Dacca.⁵⁵ It was also felt that the possibility of the institution of a High Court in Dacca would mean 'a weaker Calcutta High Court,' and consequently a diminished importance of the lawyer class belonging mostly to the Hindu community. Early in January 1904, the Indian press began to report protest meetings from the towns and villages in the *mofussil*. The news of Japan's success in her war with Russia introduced a new tone into the Bengali press, 'a truculent and threatening note replacing the wailing antagonism which had hitherto been its most distinguished characteristic.' The four leading Calcutta Bengali-owned daily newspapers, the *Bengalee*, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, the *Indian Mirror* and the *Hindoo Patriot*, protested against the division of the Bengali race, and the principal vernacular papers, viz., the *Sanjibani* and the *Bangabasi*, expressed unwavering hostility to any partition in general terms. Several objections to the Partition, valid or concocted, were thoroughly exploited to rouse the opposition of the landholders

and the legal and commercial classes. The most influential landlords of Bengal were opposed to the partition from the very first, but nearly all of them with a few exceptions were Hindus. Among the few Muslim landlords who protested against the partition was Maulvi Anwar Ali Khan, *zamindar* and District Board member, who presided over an anti-partition meeting on 17 January 1904 at Chittagong. The Collector of Chittagong reported that it was a 'fairly representative' meeting of all classes, 'except the merchant community, and the speakers were chiefly pleaders.'⁵⁶ The Muhammadan *zamindar* of Bogra, Syed Hafizur Rahman Chaudhuri presided over a meeting on 22 July 1905, at which it was decided to send telegrams to the newspapers to express disapproval of the partition. But the most influential Muslim landlord of Eastern Bengal, the Nawab of Dacca, was from the very beginning reproved by his fellow landlords for his apathy in the matter, and as is well known, he subsequently became a strong supporter of the partition scheme.

The opposition was by no means confined to the Bengali press. The leading English-owned Calcutta papers (notably the *Englishman* which was an advocate of the views held by the legal profession) were against the scheme of partition. The Bengal Chamber of Commerce saw no objection from a commercial point of view to the territorial readjustment, 'but strongly objected to the proposals generally without a guarantee that the jurisdiction of the High Court over the transferred districts would not be interfered with in the slightest degree.' Two leading members of the Chamber, Cable and Ellworthy, gave a pledge to Sita Nath Roy of Bhagyakul to render all assistance in opposing the partition scheme.⁵⁷ Before long, public opinion in Bengal which in the *mofussil* districts comprised the opinion of the local Bar and of the local schoolmasters was roused to strong opposition against the partition proposals. This advanced section of the Bengalees before long succeeded in securing the active adherence of many landlords which resulted in protests from classes not usually addicted to agitation.' The opposition to the Partition, as it turned out, was largely confined to the landlords, lawyers, schoolmasters and commercial classes whose predominating interests were felt to be at stake in a division of the province. In Eastern Bengal,

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it may be said that the whole of the Bar, the whole of the Judicial department, by far the larger number of Deputy Magistrates, the greater part of the police, and the great majority of the *zamindars*, were Hindus; the majority of the peasantry who were Muslims were by themselves indifferent to the Partition. But the small section of educated Muhammadans in Eastern Bengal was gradually made conscious of the fact that the Partition would force on the Government of the new province the claims of their co-religionists to special consideration. As a result, opinion on the Partition became sharply divided on religious lines. It was not, as has been claimed by L. Hare, the second Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 'a geographical accident that religion has come into the question at all'.⁵⁸ It was the bureaucracy that was fully aware of the existence of this 'geographical accident' (i.e. the Muslim majority in Eastern Bengal) and exploited the religious aspect of the issue to invest it with a communal tinge.

However, in each camp were found members of the other community. It suited the bureaucracy along with their Muslim supporters of the Partition to count the number of seceders from their following as insignificant. The leaders of the anti-partition agitation on their part, having made great efforts to enlist the sympathies of the Muhammadans on their side, laid particular stress on the latter's attendance at such meetings. In view of the fact that cliques and factional splits were quite a regular feature of Muslim political life, the Partition of Bengal presented a concerted issue over which the rift in the Muslim political opinion came to the fore. From the very beginning there was a small section of the Muslim community led by men like Abdul Rasul, A.H. Ghaznavi, Liaquat Hussain, Maulvi Dedar Bukhsh, Abul Kasem, Abul Hossein, Din Mohammed, Dr Gaffur Ismail Siraji, Khan Bahadur Mahomed Yusuf and many others who marched with the Hindu opponents of the partition, pledged their support to *swadeshi* and boycott and suffered equally. Prayers against the Partition were reported from mosques in Mymensingh (January 1904), and in Barisal and Serampore (August 1905).⁵⁹ The day on which the Partition of Bengal became effective (16 October 1905) also witnessed the opening of a National Fund for building a Federation Hall

and for the promotion and development of *swadeshi* industries and industrial education. Abdul Sovan Chaudhuri whose name was mentioned in the list of trustees (Managing Committee) promised a donation of Rs 1,000 to the National Fund. Abdul Rasul, a barrister, was made a member of the Executive Committee, and Abdul Halim Ghaznavi, a Secretary of the said National Fund. Besides, several societies which had come into operation, viz., the Brati Samiti, Students' New Association, included a sprinkling of Muhammadan members, particularly Muhammadan students.

When the Partition was carried out and the argument of administrative facility was advanced, Abdul Rasul presiding over the anti-partition meeting held at Rajabazar in 1905 remarked : 'If it facilitates anything, it will facilitate the poking of official nose into the private affairs of the people'.⁶⁰ The *Mussalman* reported three years later that the events of that intervening period 'have shown that this prognostication has more or less come to be true'.⁶¹ The action of the Government in connection with the dispersal of the Barisal provincial conference under the presidency of Abdul Rasul was vehemently denounced by Muhammad Jan at a meeting at the College Square on 13 May 1906 at which 4,000 Muslims were said to have gathered.⁶² The first anniversary of the Swadeshi Bandhab Samiti celebrated on 6 August 1906, was presided over by Syed Motahar Hossein who has been described as 'the pride of Barisal and the ornament of the Mussalman Society'.⁶³ On the occasion of the celebration of the first anniversary of the partition, two rival meetings were held in Calcutta in 1906. While the pro-partition meeting was organized by the Muslims, the latter consisted mainly of Hindus. But, significantly enough, 500 Muhammadans attended the latter meeting which was presided over by Khan Bahadur Mahomed Yusuf, who was also the President of the Central National Mahomedan Association. The Muhammadans endeavoured to dissuade him from presiding at the meeting, but the only concession that they could obtain from him was an announcement to the effect that he was attending the meeting in his private capacity and not as representing the Muhammadan Association in any way.⁶⁴ But for acting contrary to the wishes of the Muhammadan community, Mahomed Yusuf, was sub-

sequently replaced by Maulvi Abdul Jubbar as President of the Central National Mohomedan Association. The pro-partition anniversary meeting held at Marcus Square in Calcutta was attended by not less than 20,000 Muhammadans, and speeches were made by Muhammadan religious leaders in favour of the partition and in support of the Government. The interest shown by the Muhammadans in pro-partition meetings was 'by far the most remarkable feature of the proceedings of the 16th October',⁶⁵ recorded the official circles with a note of triumph. There was a natural tendency in the bureaucratic circles to explain away Muhammadan participation in the anti-partition agitation as 'merely perfunctory' and to underestimate any Muhammadan participant by commenting adversely on his social status, rank or influence. It was their contention that the Muhammadans took no 'independent interest' in the movement, and those who attended meetings did so under the influence of the Bengali Hindus who, as their landlords or for similar reasons, could bring pressure to bear upon them. Official circles described Abdul Rasul, a native of Assam and Barrister-at-Law, as a 'briefless barrister' who hardly represented Muhammadan opinion. His lieutenant was one Liaquat Hussain, a native of Patna, 'a person of no importance in his own town. He is really a paid agent, but is glorified by the Bengali Press as a leader of the people'.⁶⁶ Abul Kasem, the editor of the *Mussalman*, the leading organ of the nationalist Muslim, was dubbed as a 'Muhammadan professional agitator'. Khan Bahadur Mahomed Yusuf was described by the Director of Criminal Intelligence, H.A. Stuart, as a Hindu of the goldsmith caste by birth and adopted as a boy by a Muhammadan pleader of Gaya. He had a somewhat poor practice in Calcutta and was disappointed at not obtaining a seat on the Bench of the Calcutta High Court.⁶⁷

The anti-Partition agitation found its most virulent expression in the *swadeshi* (promotion of indigenous industries) and boycott movements. Early in August 1905, the Congress agitators in Calcutta proclaimed a boycott of English piece-goods and other imported articles with the avowed object of inducing the Lancashire manufacturers to use their influence in Parliament to procure reversal of partition and reunion of Bengal as a Presidency under a Governor appointed from

England.⁶⁵ The movement was directed from Calcutta and worked through committees of pleaders and schoolmasters in the mofussil. It was carried out by organized agencies of students who, with the open or tacit approval of their masters, enforced boycott by picketing, intimidation and by actively preventing importation and purchase of European goods. Needless to mention, under these circumstances, Europeans, Hindus or Muslims, whoever violated the enforcements, suffered alike. The *swadeshi* movement, which was at first adopted as retaliation against the bitter insult offered by the partition of Bengal, came to be regarded as an infallible weapon for the solution of the financial problem of India. Later it rose beyond financial policy and became a political, social and even a religious movement. Boycott was its inseparable companion. The Bengalis cried, 'Partition or no partition, *swadeshi* for ever', and the logical finale of this declaration was the demand for *swaraj*. There was no doubt that, as an economic reform, the *swadeshi* movement gained many advocates and sympathizers who would not have accepted it as a political move against the Government. It is probable too that the priests and other persons of religious orders supported it as a religious rather than as a political reform, and as a measure likely to subserve their material interests. Nevertheless, the movement owed its origin and vitality to the political associations. The political agitators introduced the religious factor and gained the adherence of some of the religious teachers. The initiative did not come from the religious teachers, and they were not primarily responsible for this most dangerous innovation in political agitation. So too, as a purely economic movement, *swadeshi* had been tried before, but had failed signally.

The success of the *swadeshi* movement meant the revival of indigenous trades and industries. As an economic movement *swadeshi* was, but could have been more popular with the Muslims. But used as a weapon against the Partition, the movement in order to appeal to the masses evoked the fervour of a religious movement and consequently antagonized the Muslims. Despite these factors there were Muslims who gave whole-hearted support to the *swadeshi* cause. 'In view of the formidable barriers to unity set up by tradition, British policy and the attitudes of many Hindu nationalists, what is sur-

prising is not the eventual alienation of the bulk of the Muslims, but the extent of their participation in the *swadeshi* movement'. notwithstanding 'an element of stage-management', some amount of Muslim participation was evident in every aspect of the *swadeshi* movement and there was quite a number of Muslim *swadeshi* preachers, orators and agitators among the regular *swadeshites*.⁶⁹ Among the organs of Muslim public opinion which supported the *swadeshi* were two weeklies, the Bengali *Soltan* and the English-language *Mussalman*. An active supporter of *swadeshi* and boycott, the *Soltan* remarked: 'If the Musalmans give up *swadeshi* in a spirit of antagonism to the Hindus or for fear of incurring the displeasure of the English, all the arts and industries of India will be monopolized by the Hindus, and the Musalman community, which is sufficiently poor even now, will become poorer still'.⁷⁰ In order to gain the adherence of the Muslims to the *swadeshi* cause the anti-partitionists and the *Mussalman* made capital out of the issue that *swadeshi* was bound to benefit the Muslim *jolas* (cloth weavers) more, since the above occupation was followed mainly by the followers of Islam. Since the inauguration of the *swadeshi* movement, 'no section of the Indian community has benefited more than the Jolas', remarked the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.⁷¹ It was gratifying to find in the *Calcutta Gazette*, remarked the *Mussalman*, that 'the Government of Bengal has admitted that the *swadeshi* movement has given an impetus to the weaving and some other industries'.⁷² In the course of a lengthy report on the Land Revenue Administration of the province it was stated that in the Burdwan Division, in the 24-Parganas, in Nadia, Jessore and Khulna, 'the *swadeshi* movement has given an impetus to the local manufacture of cloth and thus has improved the condition of the weavers'. The above results were significant inasmuch as they were achieved in the course of two years following the Partition. What was even more significant was the fact that in an article entitled 'Do Mussulmans Benefit Better Than The Hindus By Swadeshim?' a statistical survey of the 24-Parganas, Nadia, Jessore and Khulna showed 29,483 Hindu *tantis* to 108,777 Muslim *jolas*. The paper therefore remarked that it was clear that 'Swadeshim or preference of country-made clothes will benefit the Mussalmans as much as, if not more than the Hindus'.⁷³

In spite of the benefits accruing to a particular section of the Muslims from the *Swadeshi* agitation, it seems surprising that a relatively small section of nationalist Muslims along with their organ, the *Mussalman*, found it necessary, time and again to reiterate that the Muslims were the real beneficiaries of the *swadeshi* movement, and should therefore support it wholeheartedly. In an article dated October 1908, the *Mussalman* remarked: 'It will be seen that truly educated Mussalmans have thoroughly understood the present movement for the economic regeneration of the country and that there are men in the community who anticipated it and worked for the cause of *swadeshim* even before the inauguration of the movement'. The reference was to an article, 'Indian Musalmans and Swadeshim' in which the author, Mushir Hossain Kidwai, Bar-at-Law, claimed that in 1903, about three years before the *swadeshi* movement was started in Bengal, he had written a little pamphlet in Hindustani showing the material, economic, social and political advantages of developing Indian art, industry and commerce. He believed that in India, *swadeshim* would prove more beneficial to Muslims than to Hindus.⁷⁴ As a matter of fact, even before the middle of the nineteenth century, the landed aristocracy of Bengal had made a start by investing their money in indigenous enterprises like indigo factories, sugar cultivation and banking. Prince Dwarakanath Tagore was one of the Directors of the Union Bank. Others in this field were Surya Kumar Tagore, Raghuram Goswami, Khajah Alimullah, Khajah Abdul Gani and others.⁷⁵ In or about 1905, was established the first Muslim *Swadeshi* venture, the Bengal Hosiery Company, with a capital of Rs 2 lakhs and a board of directors consisting of Nawab Syed Abdus Sobhan, A.M. Ghaznavi, Ahmed Musaji Solaji, Bhupendra Nath Bose and Radhacharan Pal.⁷⁶ The United Bengal Company of the Muslim *swadeshi* leader Ghaznavi represented another successful example of Muslim *swadeshi* entrepreneurship. The Bengal Steam Navigation Company was started by some patriotic and public-spirited Muhammadan gentlemen of Chittagong and Rangoon, and 'it represented the triumph of *Swadeshi* cause', remarked Surendra Nath Banerjee.⁷⁷ Practically a Muslim enterprise, it was 'a standing monument of what the Mussalmans have done unostentatiously in the matter of *swadeshim*'.⁷⁸

Again it was Abdul Rasul who presided over the very first meeting recorded of the educational boycott movement, and was one of the first among the nationalist leaders to call for a national university.⁷⁹

It was the contention of the nationalist Muslims that a few misguided and self-seeking men (such men being not rare among the Hindus too) had deliberately led the easily excitable uneducated masses into error, which accounted for the presence of the anti-swadeshites in the Muslim community. Moreover, a section of the Muslims who supported *swadeshi*, had committed a blunder by thinking that they could do so 'without harbouring the idea of excluding things foreign'.⁸⁰ They failed to realize that when the competition in the field of industries was practically with an alien government, and where the people were impotent to impose a protective tariff on indigenous goods, boycott was the only weapon available to the people. As a matter of fact, a substantial section of the Muhammadans of Eastern Bengal believed that it was they who saved the European mercantile community from ruin brought about by the *swadeshi* movement. 'Had they not fought with the Hindoos and shed their life blood to check the spread of *swadeshi* movement, the boycott in Eastern Bengal would have been complete. The British Government and European merchants to secure their purposes, made use of the Muhammadans as mere cat's paws'.⁸¹ As soon as the purpose was served and the Muslims were crying for vengeance, the Government engaged Hindu police to arrest the Muhammadans indiscriminately and employed the Muhammadan deputies to send them to jail with exemplary punishment. The *swadeshi* Muslims included a few *zamindars* and some educated and influential men, who like many of their Hindu counterparts, confined their activities to signing petitions, lending their names to the *rakhi-bandhan*, national fund, or similar appeals, and occasionally presided over meetings. But the bulk of the Muslim upper class remained either politically indifferent or hostile, and no one on the *swadeshi* side could rank in social status or influence with men like Nawab Salimullah of Dacca, Nawab Ali Chaudhuri of Mymensingh and Amir Hossein of Calcutta. A considerable section of the *swadeshi* Muslim leaders were recruited from the humbler sections of society and were invariably

described in official sources as paid agents of the Hindus. Notwithstanding an 'evident bias' in the official sources, bits of evidence however do suggest 'the existence of some kind of cash connection' between the Hindu and Muslim *swadeshi* agitators.⁸² The separatist Muslims along with their spokesmen, the *Mihir-o-Sudhakar*, dittoed the Government stance of dubbing the *swadeshi* Muslim agitators as 'all in the receipt of pay, hired speakers, all sham'.⁸³

If the majority of the Muslims turned out to be supporters of the pro-partition movement, the responsibility for this alienation devolved dually on the methods and approaches of the Hindu peripatetic agitators and to a considerable extent on the Government's policy of playing up one community against the other. What started as a constitutional opposition to an administrative measure, viz., the Partition of Bengal, before long took the form of an avowedly anti-British campaign, aiming at the expulsion of 'foreigners', and at 'national independence', and urging the enforcement of the boycott by open coercion and a system of general rioting as the means to these ends. In furtherance of these objectives, the most reckless appeals were made to race-feeling and religious intolerance, and in particular no pains were spared to win over the Muhammadans to the policy of boycott. The Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Sir L. Hare, in a letter to Minto, testified to the manner in which paid Muhammadan emissaries were used to spread the legend that foreign goods, particularly salt and sugar, were designedly polluted with impurities, namely, the blood and bone of cows and pigs, in order to excite the Muhammadan fanaticism which was always latent in Eastern Bengal.⁸⁴ One is reminded in this connection of the grievous issue of the greased cartridges that sparked off the mighty conflagration of 1857. 'So far from the whole country being of one mind against the partition the Mussalmans, who form 60 per cent of the population, are in favour of it', noted Bamfylde Fuller, the Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam on 4 January 1906.⁸⁵ As a matter of fact, when the Lieutenant-Governor first reached Dacca, a deputation of the leading Muhammadan residents of the city expressly asked for protection against the harassing tactics of the *swadeshi* preachers. It was due in a high degree to the 'loyal manner

in which the Nawab Bahadur has exercised his influence', that the Muhammadans of the province continued to remain loyal to the Government. How great his influence had been is proved by the admission of the anti-Government Press which constantly denounced him for keeping the Muhammadans from joining the agitation.⁸⁶ Hare remarked that 'the movement has genuine support from the great mass of the Muhammadans of this province',⁸⁷ although the *Bengalee* and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* tried to belittle it as much as possible and did not hesitate to remark that it was 'got up' by the officials. Instances were not wanting where the Muhammadans were compelled by violence from purchasing foreign goods, had to pay more and get worse goods, and were subjected to fines and oppression by the agents of the landlords at the instigation of the agitators. The Muhammadans who purchased foreign goods especially took it to heart that they as customers suffered at the hands of the boycotters, while the dealers in *belati* (foreign) goods in East Bengal, who belonged generally to the rich Shaha class and did not allow themselves to be browbeaten in their business transactions, were not generally interfered with.⁸⁸ The business in piece-goods and foreign salt and sugar was heavily damaged by this agitation, and 'both these businesses were in the hands of the Hindus and Muslims'. Moreover, the boycott of imported boots particularly hit hard the Muslim boot-importers of the Chandni Chowk area.⁸⁹ The Hindus who practically monopolized the Bar, pressurized their Muslim clientele by refusing to take up their cases in the court, if the latter supported the Government and the Partition. The majority of the Hindu pleaders of the Mymensingh Bar, for example, and some of the Hindu *zamindars* protested against any demonstration of welcome to Bamfylde Fuller. The Muhammadans, however, disagreed and thought it necessary to get up a fitting reception to the ruler of the Province. Here occurred a distinct breach which subsequently developed into a counter-movement against the Hindus. The bulk of the tenantry in Eastern Bengal which happened to be Muslim, would have remained by themselves indifferent to the partition if they had not to suffer great hardships at the hands of the agitators, the majority of whom were Hindus. But what made communalism dangerous in Bengal was the incongruous Muslim combination of aristo-

cratic leadership with anti-landlord demagogy',⁹⁰ a combination made possible by the peculiar socio-economic conditions prevalent in Bengal, where the majority of the landlords were Hindus and the bulk of the peasantry was Muslim. Although the boycott movement spread to the agricultural classes it was never adopted willingly by the Muhammadans.⁹¹ The effect of the artificial demand for country-made goods was to raise prices very greatly, and the cultivators suffered heavy pecuniary losses from ostracism of imported articles. Against this background, the preaching of aggressive anti-swadeshi tactics by fanatical *maulvis* among 'grossly ignorant' ryots who could be 'easily imposed upon by designing persons' were bound to have baneful effects. As a matter of fact, several years before the partition was heard of, *mullahs* from Peshawar and the trans-frontier tracts went about in the interior of the Faridpur and Barisal districts, 'instilling fiercely fanatical notions into the minds of the lower class', reported the Deputy Magistrate of Mymensingh. Indulgence in cow slaughter on a large scale and 'a sort of unreasoning hatred of kafirs' grew among a body of ignorant and low class Muslims. The preachings of the *maulvis* in the post-partition days that 'the Sirkar was at their back and would wink at their harrying the Muslims,' set ablaze the fire of blind fanaticism.⁹² This increasing collaboration between the religious preachers and the new generation of professional and lower middle-class Muslims was of highest importance in the political mobilization of the rural masses. In fact, these *mullahs* through the numerous *anjumans* that came into existence in the Bengal countryside during the close of the nineteenth century 'became the principal instrument for fostering a religio-political outlook. They organized the masses, Islamized their outlook and attitudes and finally mobilized them for political purposes'. The masses were made to feel that 'they were part of a larger political conflict to which their educated co-religionists were committed'.⁹³ If the *maulvis* were busy exciting the 'latent fanaticism' of the Muslim masses, the Muslim upper classes countered the slogan of *swadeshi* with that of *swajati* urging purely Muslim commerce, industry and education'.⁹⁴ Simultaneously, the introduction of the Hindu religious element to give more vitality to the boycott movement met with considerable success in the districts around Calcutta.

But it also detracted from the wider appeal of the movement in the larger Hindu-Muslim perspective. The most noteworthy incident in connection with the spread of the movement through religious influence was the meeting at Kalighat temple on the occasion of the *Mahalaya* on 28 September 1905, at which thousands of people vowed in the presence of Goddess Kali to abstain from buying foreign articles or employing foreigners to do anything that could be done by an Indian.⁹⁵ The *swadeshi* meetings opened and closed with Hindu songs like *Bande Mataram* which annoyed Muslim sensibilities as 'a pure Hindu cry with disagreeable associations'.⁹⁶ To the extent that boycott was tied to the anti-partition agitation, it necessarily created communal tensions. Muslim traders who had no particular reason to boycott British goods in favour of those of the Hindu manufacturers, and Muslim shop-keepers who were not displeased with partition or encouraged by the association of *swadeshi* with Kali found themselves coerced and in retaliation organized resistance.⁹⁷ In consequence, some of the ugliest communal riots of this century followed. Communal dissensions were further aggravated by the prosecution of the Nawab of Dacca by some of the leaders of the anti-partition agitation and a section of the Indian press. Atikullah, a stepbrother of Salimullah and an indebted member of the Nawab's family, was laid hold of by the anti-partition leaders, and was financially supported by them in a course of action in respect of the Nawab and his family which was, in the opinion of most Muhammadans, destructive of the interests of the family. The Nawab family of Dacca was highly respected among the Muhammadans and this action consequently seriously intensified ill-feeling.⁹⁸ The conglomerate effect of these developments adversely affected whatever genuine attempts at communal unity were made by the *swadeshi* preachers.

On the British side of the picture, the regime of Bamfylde Fuller, the first Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam, crowned the original administrative blunder committed by the bureaucracy. The undue favouritism shown by the Lieutenant-Governor to the Muhammadans and his reckless speeches led the simple Muslims to form the extravagant notion that they had got special privileges in many respects and among others to humiliate the Hindus. They were encouraged in this

notion by various other acts of flagrant injustice meted out to the members of the Hindu community. In short, everything possible was done to create a breach between the two communities. This dangerous game naturally led to a Muslim upheaval in Mymensingh. It was only a question of time when the contagion would spread to other districts and ignite a universal conflagration. A 'wise and tactful Government was (therefore) required to prevent this change from being emphasised and from unduly operating to their (the Hindus') disadvantage', remarked Andrew Fraser who was obviously referring to the changed status of the Hindus as 'very considerably in the minority in the transferred districts'. 'The recognition of this change undoubtedly led to a strong feeling against the partition on the part of many Hindus in, or connected with the transferred districts. I believe, however, that this would probably not have been prolonged, but for measures which had the appearance of an unsympathetic attitude of repression against the Hindus on the part of the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, and certain statements which were interpreted as indicating a policy of unduly favouring the Muhammadans there'.⁹⁹ Much has been written by way of criticism of Fuller's efforts 'to blow flies away from cannon' in the context of the Lieutenant-Governor's attempts to cripple the anti-partition and swadeshi agitation. But years later Fuller made certain startling revelations. In the first place, he stated that he was opposed to the partition on communal lines as a game 'hardly worth the candle'.¹⁰ He next admitted that the efforts which he made 'to rouse the status of the Muhammadan community were unwelcome to the Hindu intelligentsia'.¹⁰¹ And finally, the ex-Governor perhaps unwittingly confessed the helplessness of the situation into which the partition of Bengal 'forced' him, 'that of a special advocate of Muhammadan interests'.¹⁰²

The greatest mistake committed by the anti-partitionists was to allow their agitation to develop into a Hindu-Muslim question. It would naturally be contended in self-defence that the Government had really intended to jeopardize Hindu-Muslim unity. But the leaders of Bengal politics should have been on their guard against playing it up. By raising the cry that the Muslims had been placed in a position of predominance in the new province, they turned a political question

into one of religious rivalry. Even as a matter of tactics, not to speak of higher grounds, it was unwise to accept as the basis of Bengali citizenship this distinction of creed. Instead this particular aspect of the case was so strongly urged by many of the leaders in the agitation that it took practically the form of an anti-Muhammadan movement. This was the view that the Muhammadans took. And, as is well known, they rose to resist it. The result was a great Muhammadan demonstration which united the Muhammadans throughout India in defence of what was believed to be a Muhammadan interest. The foundation of this inter-provincial unity was already well and truly laid by the inception of the Muhammadan Educational Conference by Sir Syed in 1886.

Lord Minto (1905-10), though a Conservative, was no admirer of Curzon whose partition policy he could not accept with any satisfaction. But appointed by a Conservative Government in Britain, and true to Conservative principles in regard to the Indian administration, he accepted the partition, 'that vexed inheritance' to which he had fallen unfortunately heir as a 'settled fact'. Although the Viceroy believed that the bureaucracy was 'committed to a somewhat unfortunate piece of legislation', yet he decided to uphold the partition as a 'settled fact' without justifying it. The Viceroy's views were well-matched with those of the Secretary of State, John Morley, who conveyed to Minto on 3 May 1906, that the 'Partition is a disagreeable pill well, that is all the more reason why we should take every chance of gilding it'.¹⁰³ Minto was convinced that the Muslims in India required special safeguards. Acting on that presumption, he undertook to give a definite bent to Muslim politics towards separatism. Minto like the Secretary of State 'had a liking for the Mohammedans' and had 'no wish to add a Brahman bureaucracy to an English'.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, the Viceroy discarded the idea of 'a united India in a Congress sense' as a 'myth'. The attitude of the Muslims only reinforced his stand. 'Between Curzon who brought the partition and Hardinge who withdrew it, Minto had struggled to retain it. In the process of that struggle, serious issues emerged with far-reaching consequences'.¹⁰⁵ The Anglo-Muhammadan *rap-prochement* of the period produced two notable results, viz., a deputation of leading Muslims to the Viceroy at Simla, and

the birth of an all-India Muslim organization as a new political force in support of the Government. The Simla deputation facilitated the bureaucratic design of sharply dividing the Muslims from the Hindus in the subsequent politico-constitutional developments in the country, and the Muslim League gradually emerged with the passage of time as the champion of the two-nation theory.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Aligarh under the fostering care of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was gradually becoming the intellectual capital of the Muslims in India. On the whole, in the absence of any other progressive movement (no significant Muslim leadership emerged either in Bengal or in Bombay after Syed Ameer Ali (1890) and Badruddin Tyabji (1895) had respectively retired from politics on accepting their elevation to the Bench), the thinking Muhammadans all over India came under the influence of the Aligarh school of thought. After the demise of Sir Syed (1898), the leadership of the community went into the hands of his younger contemporaries and disciples. As long as they remained at the helm of affairs, there was no possibility of any overt breach with the established traditions of Muhammadan policy. But, by the turn of the century, as a result of their efforts, 'young Muslim' elements well-versed in English and drawn mainly from the lawyers and the professional classes emerged to challenge the conservatives. For some time this young Muhammadan party was becoming increasingly restless and their thoughts ran easily in the Congress mould. To keep this young generation away from the Congress, it became a matter of urgent necessity to start a Muhammadan party on the same lines as the Congress, to agitate for the same ends and pursue the same methods, but, of course, under the active patronage of the bureaucracy. The European Principals of the Aligarh College who had all along been active in influencing Muslim political opinion became even more so at this juncture. The Secretary of State John Morley enclosed a note on 22 June 1906 by Morison, Principal of Aligarh College, who pointed out that 'the chance of the present' lay in the fact that the Muslims have not yet gone over to the Congress ranks, and 'if Government would indicate or initiate a moderately progressive policy which was not based on representation it might

capture Muhammadan support and enlist conservative Hinduism (example of the Rajputs) on its side also.'¹⁰⁶ It was about the same time that Minto in a private letter to Morley remarked that he had been thinking a good deal lately 'of a possible counterpoise to Congress aims.'¹⁰⁷ Minto rarely missed a chance to please the Muslims. During his regime 'Aligarh was given greater prominence, and the Aligarh politicians became Minto's trump card.' He knew the history of the Aligarh movement, and wished the home authorities knew it as well.¹⁰⁸

Meanwhile the situation in the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam had taken a serious turn over the issue of Minto's acceptance of Bamfylde Fuller's resignation in August 1906 in connection with the Government of India's refusal to support reprisals against schoolboy agitators in Serajganj. It has been already seen how the anti-partition agitation originally directed against the British Government increasingly assumed the appearance of being aimed at the Muslims who had supported the partition. The Muslims of the new province had learnt to look upon the Lieutenant-Governor as their patron and precisely for the same reasons the latter had not only alienated the Hindu opponents of the partition, but had even dealt with them rather harshly. The Muslim leadership of the new province which had been for some time contemplating to counteract the Congress agitation against the partition, was in the beginning somewhat slow to react. The leadership being concentrated in the hands of the landholders and upper middle-class, comprising mainly the rural gentry because of their vested interests nurtured great hopes of the Government. But the resignation of Fuller stirred the Muslims as the partition and *swadeshi* had popularized the Congress. The Muslims at length came out with open condemnation of Government action and praised Fuller, while the agitators were jubilant over his fall. The general feeling of the Muslims was that in yielding to the *Babu* agitation the Government had shown its weakness and had overlooked the loyal adherence of the Muslim community to the Government. The change of heart was amply evident from a letter written by a Bengali Muslim, Seraj-ul-Islam,¹⁰⁹ who had originally opposed the partition and thirteen years earlier, had owed his election to the Viceroy's Legislative Council mainly to his Hindu voters. The departure of Sir

Bamfylde Fuller was marked by a Muhammadan agitation. If Fuller's resignation had given the anti-Partitionists some reason to feel hopeful, they would have been seriously alarmed had they known what was simultaneously being contemplated in the top circles of the bureaucracy. Referring to the 'strong Muhammedan feeling' on behalf of Fuller, Minto remarked: 'As long as it does not get out of control it will, I hope, be very useful to us. It shows, at any rate, that there are two sides to the question of "Partition", and though the Mohammedan population is slow to move, it is quite evident that any reconsideration of "Partition" would raise a dangerous storm.'¹¹⁰ There was only one answer to the suggestion of a reconsideration of partition, remarked the Viceroy. 'It is dead, dead, dead.'¹¹¹ In order to allay the fears of the Muslims who were alarmed at what they considered 'Bengali success', the Viceroy was convinced that 'the justice of our safeguarding their interests will become all the more apparent, and ought to be of real assistance to us in dealing with much of the onesided agitation...'¹¹² 'It was easier for Minto to pose as the protector of the underdog and thereby isolate the agitators as Hindus rather than nationalists.'¹¹³ After his resignation, Fuller on his arrival in England sought to attract British public opinion towards the Muhammadan cause. He made a 'perfectly monstrous' statement, as Minto put it, that 'the time had now come when the Muhammadans could not keep silent and trust to Government absolutely for justice.'¹¹⁴ The Muhammadans did not really keep silent and their agitation once set afoot culminated in a deputation to the Viceroy. The partition of Bengal and connected issues reacted upon the Muslim feelings throughout India and quickened their political consciousness such as nothing else did. This nascent awakening of the Muslims found a favourable field for political activism when in 1906 Morley in course of his Budget speech declared in the House of Commons that Minto was contemplating the question of extending the representative element in the Legislative Council. The Muslims under the leadership of Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk were geared into action to negotiate in advance with the Government, in order to safeguard their rights and interests in the new legislation.

Historians, both contemporary and later, are divided in

their opinions regarding the theory of British manipulation of the Muslim deputation which waited on the Viceroy on 1 October 1906, at Simla, and the part played by the European Principal of the Aligarh College, Archbold, who like his two predecessors, Beck and Morison, guided Muslim politics in a channel most favourable to the Government. Among those who subscribe to the view that Archbold was the prime mover and originator of the idea of the deputation (on the basis of his oft-quoted letter of 10 August 1906), and support the thesis that the British aroused the Muslims as a counterpoise to Congress aims are Mehta and Patwardhan,¹¹⁵ Ram Gopal,¹¹⁶ Mohammad Noman¹¹⁷ and Lal Bahadur.¹¹⁸ In more recent times, S. R. Wasti, with an inclination to absolve the Muslims of the guilt of political timorousness observed, that to brand the Simla Deputation as a 'command performance,' or to maintain that it was engineered by the Government, is 'to distort history and to underrate both Muslim political aspirations and the integrity and intellectual capability of Muslim leadership.' Wasti's contention was that 'the inspiration came from within rather than from without.'¹¹⁹ M. S. Jain on the other hand believed, that 'the desire of the Muslims to have a separate political existence and the willingness of the British Government to accept them as stooges',¹²⁰ was responsible for the deputation of 1906. In the opinion of this scholar, the Indian nationalists, 'in their pious wish to ignore the fact of Muslim communalism, straightaway branded the deputation of 1906 as a "command performance" without looking to the role which the Muslims played at the time.'¹²¹

A proper analysis of contemporary evidence goes far to disprove the generally accepted notion that the Muslim deputation to the Viceroy at Simla on 1 October 1906 was a 'command performance.' In fact, evidence is now available which proves according to Pirzada, that as early as 1903 Muslim leaders were contemplating to send a deputation to England to present an address to the Emperor of India on behalf of the Muslims of India, but its implementation was considered 'extremely difficult.'¹²² The very significant and intriguing correspondence between Mohsin-ul-Mulk and Archbold (Secretary and Principal respectively of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College), Dunlop Smith (Private Secretary to the Viceroy) and

Ibbetson (Member of the Viceroy's Council) reveal the origin of the Simla deputation in its proper perspective. On 4 August 1906, Mohsin-ul-Mulk in his letter to Archbold pointed out that Morley's speech on the Indian budget was 'commonly believed' to be a great success achieved by the 'National Congress',¹²³ and that this speech would produce a greater inclination on the part of the young, educated, but disappointed Muhammadans to join the Congress. There was a general complaint brewing up that the Aligarh people took no part in politics, and did not safeguard the political rights of the Muhammadans. The Secretary received several letters expressing the usual apprehension of domination by the majority at the introduction of 'election' on a more extended scale in the new scheme of legislation that was about to be drawn up. The same letter proposed that a memorial be submitted to the Viceroy to draw the attention of Government to a consideration of the rights of the Muhammadans. Mohsin-ul-Mulk asked for the 'valuable advice' of Archbold as to whether it would be advisable to submit a memorial from the Muhammadans, and to request the Viceroy's permission for a deputation to wait on him.¹²⁴ The above constitutes a clear proof of the fact that the initiative for submitting a memorial to the Viceroy came from the Muhammadans themselves, though prior permission was sought from the Government. W.A.J. Archbold undoubtedly played the role of saviour, though from 'behind the screen.' In a letter dated 9 August 1906 Archbold requested Dunlop Smith, Private Secretary to the Viceroy, to sound Minto about the deputation of the Muslims. He especially pointed out that the Dacca Muhammadans were very much interested in the matter 'and will certainly join in *any deputation of the kind suggested in the Nawab's letter*'.¹²⁵ Keeping in mind particularly the 'excited state' of the Dacca Muhammadans, Archbold referred to 'a certain widespread nervousness and uneasiness as to the future, a fear lest they should be left out in the cold. It might be a good thing if...their energies could be directed in a natural and legitimate direction;' it would, he was sure, quiet things 'if same reassuring statement could be made to the deputation, all of which need not involve injustice to the Hindus.'¹²⁶

In a subsequent letter dated 18 August Mohsin-ul-Mulk

thanked Archbold for sending the draft of the formal application, but objected to the opening phrases which gave an assurance of a deliberate aloofness on the part of the Muhammadans from political agitation in the future. This shows that the memorial submitted by the deputationists was drafted in the main by the English Principal of the Aligarh College. The Secretary then quoted at some length from a letter which he had received from Syed Nawab Ali Choudhuri of Dacca giving an idea of the sense of 'severe shock' received by the Muhammadans of Eastern Bengal, over the resignation of Sir Bamfylde Fuller. In a way the Government had taught 'a good lesson to the Muhammadans,' wrote Nawab Ali Choudhuri. The Muhammadans of Bengal felt that had they agitated like the Hindus instead of following the Government and raised their voice up to the Parliament, they would not have seen 'these unfortunate consequences.' These sentiments gradually came to be shared by the Muhammadans all over India, who began to think that the policy of Sir Syed and Mohsin-ul-Mulk had done no good to them. Mohsin-ul-Mulk's letter ended with a desperate hope that the Government of India would do something 'to subside the growing Mahammadan feeling and to remedy their hopelessness.'¹²⁷ Meanwhile Sir Denzil Ibbetson, a member of the Viceroy's Council, conveyed in a letter (10 August 1906) to Dunlop Smith, that he entirely agreed with the latter that 'His Excellency should receive the deputation and answer them sympathetically.'¹²⁸ As the Viceroy had consented to receive the deputation 'provided all was in order,' Archbold drew up the 'formal request' for the Muhammadans. In view of the excited state of Muhammadan feeling in Bengal, and the fact that the Muslims were rather backward in the art of political agitation, a twofold anxiety was felt by the European officials: first, that the Muhammadans 'may go wrong through ignorance,' and second, that it was 'just what their enemies would like.'¹²⁹ Archbold therefore wrote a long letter to Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhuri of Dacca, 'telling him to keep all his friends calm but alert' about the coming deputation.

Although disappointment was rife among the young educated Muslims, yet it was the turmoil in partitioned Bengal, the worsening of Hindu-Muslim relations there, and the Government's acceptance of the Lieutenant-Governor's resig-

nation that ultimately spurred a disgruntled, discontented but 'moveless' community to agitate. It was the Bengal case that geared the separatist movement into action. As a matter of fact, long before the knowledge of Minto's policy as explained in his reply to the Muhammadan deputation, 'we had contemplated submitting on Partition day for adoption a public memorial to the Secretary of State on the subject matter of the maintenance without any modification of the existing Partition of Bengal,' wrote Nawab Salimullah to H. H. Risley, Secretary to the Government of India on 7 October 1906.¹³⁰ In view of the above, it becomes easy to understand why the Nawab was not present on the occasion of the deputation at Simla, notwithstanding Pirzada's explanation of an eye-operation that the Nawab had to undergo.¹³¹ The Nawab himself stated that he joined the Lucknow Conference¹³² which contemplated the presentation of an address to His Excellency the Viceroy from the Muhammadan noblemen and gentlemen of all India. 'I had hoped,' wrote the Nawab, 'that this address would have urged for a definite policy to be enunciated by His Excellency and particularly as regards the growing unrest on the question of the Partition of Bengal, but it was deemed advisable not to put anything contentious in the address, and *disappointed as we were at this*¹³³ we cannot adequately express our joy and satisfaction at His Excellency's spontaneously going out of his way to lay down a policy of sympathy and encouragement, while His Lordship's reference to our New Province that 'Its future is assured', was far beyond our expectations and hopes, and...has calmed and allayed the dismay and consternation which has overcrowded us.'¹³⁴ In the light of this evidence it appears almost certain what Sufia Ahmed suggests as possible, that 'this controversy may have contributed to keep back Salimullah from accompanying the Deputation.'¹³⁵

In fact, on 21 October 1906, Nawab Salimullah wrote to Risley of his intention of memorializing to the Secretary of State for 'a definite pronouncement', that the partition would not be disturbed.¹³⁶ Risley's comments on the above letter throws interesting light on the possible reasons behind Salimullah's abstention from the Simla deputation. Risley suspected that the Nawab who was laid up with an injury to his eye felt that 'he has not played so prominent a part in the

Mahomedan movement as he would have liked, and that he is trying to save his face by extracting from us a separate reply to his earlier letter. One of the native papers says that some of his proposals regarding the Mahomedan address were rejected, and this is by no means improbable.¹³⁷ To what extent personal jealousies and rivalries marred the prospects of united action among the Muslims on the all-India level, may be proved by yet another example of the above description. In a letter to the Secretary of State Morley, the Viceroy wrote that Nawab Mohammed who was a member of his Legislative Council 'was to have headed the Muhammedan Deputation.' The real reason however, of his not attending with the Deputation 'was a little personal jealousy on account of the Aga Khan being selected to do so instead of himself...'¹³⁸

Be that as it may, the proposed meeting between the Viceroy and the Muslim deputationists was precipitated by the reports of Sir Lancelot Hare (1851-1922), the new Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam. Dunlop Smith had kept him in touch with the developments in the matter. In a letter to Dunlop Smith, Hare wrote that the Government of India should make it clear that it was in full sympathy with the hopes and aspirations of the Muhammadan community. If the Home Government refused to accept the assurance that these representative Muhammadans did truly represent Muhammadan opinion, so far as any opinion had been formed at all, then Hare thought, the Muhammadans would decide to organize meetings to voice their opinions. So far the Muhammadans had been advised that it was unnecessary to organize counter demonstrations. Once these were started, there would be 'a recrudescence of all the old disturbances in a much worse and more dangerous form,' ran a scarcely veiled threat from Hare. If the leaders of Muhammadan opinion saw that agitation was the only way to get their wishes fulfilled it would be difficult to hold them back from counter agitation. So far as there was any local feeling at all, the Muhammadans who were in a majority, were in favour of the new administrative division.¹³⁹

With the stage thus set, the day of reckoning came on 1 October 1906 when a deputation headed by His Highness the Aga Khan and consisting of thirty-five Muhammadans from

all parts of India waited on the Viceroy at Simla. Among the deputationists were five gentlemen of influence and status from Bengal and one from Eastern Bengal and Assam.¹⁴⁰ But it is interesting to note that no reference to the Partition of Bengal or the resignation of Bamfylde Fuller (issues over which there was much heartburn, and which in fact precipitated the deputation), was made in the rather long petition, dealing with various aspects of the Muhammadan problem. This practically amounted to a desertion of the Bengali Muslim cause, especially when even the Viceroy 'suspected that the situation in Bengal would loom large in the deputation's address.'¹⁴¹ This discreet omission however secured the adhesion of the celebrated Aga Khan's name who had been opposed to the Partition from the very beginning and did not change his views despite subsequent events. But it was due to this factor that the Congress press tried to establish that the contemplated deputation was not a representative one and 'it was the work of the frustrated Bengali Muslim leaders who were disappointed at Fuller's resignation.'¹⁴² Instead of going into the minutia of the memorial it may suffice for the purpose of the present study to emphasize its more important aspects. The memorialists pointed out at the very outset, with a note of apology, that in the absence of proper 'care and caution', the adoption of representative institutions was likely, among other evils, to place their 'national interests at the mercy of an unsympathetic majority.' It drew the Viceroy's attention 'to the political significance of the monopoly of all official influence by one class.' The petition asserted that the 'Mohammedans are a distinct community, with additional interests of our own which are not shared by other communities and these have hitherto suffered from the fact that they have not been adequately represented.' It was therefore urged that 'the position accorded to the Mahomedan community in any kind of representation, direct or indirect, and in all other ways affecting their status and influence should be commensurate not merely with their numerical strength but also with their political importance and the value of the contribution which they make to the defence of the Empire.' Since representative institutions were inevitable, the leaders suggested ways and means of safeguarding the Muhammadan interests in them, from municipal and district

boards to the Imperial Legislative Council.¹⁴³ The Muslim deputation of 1906 marked the beginning of a new epoch in Indian history. 'The Address did not merely recite the prayers. It wanted to give a "philosophy" in defence of the demands.'¹⁴⁴

Welcoming the 'representative, character' of the deputation, the Viceroy in his reply expressed his 'appreciation of the just claims of the followers of Islam and their determination to share in the political history' of the British Empire. His primary commitment was that 'the Muhammadan community particularly those of Eastern Bengal and Assam could rest assured that their political rights and interests as a community would be safeguarded in any administrative reorganization with which the Viceroy was concerned.'¹⁴⁵ Minto replied in a speech which was one of the most sagacious and tactful that he ever made,' wrote his biographer.¹⁴⁶ The Viceroy realized that no reforms could possibly work 'which did not carry with them the assent of this great community, and that the moment had come for a clear statement of his policy.'¹⁴⁷ Thus there was far more in the Viceroy's speech than the 'formal pledge' which constituted 'an inestimable advantage in the day of trouble which was dawning.' There was 'an accent of friendliness and sincerity which deeply impressed his hearers.'¹⁴⁸ In a letter dated 7 October 1906, addressed to the Private Secretary, Mohsin-ul-Mulk described the Viceroy's reply 'as a historical declaration of the policy of the Indian Government,' embodying 'a clear and sympathetic recognition of the rights of the Muhammadans of India.'¹⁴⁹ The Muhammadans had not really expected such generous treatment as was given them. Their aspirations had not merely been acknowledged, but in fact had been raised unexpectedly high by the head of the Indian Government himself. It was a commitment on behalf of the British to the cause of the Indian Muslims. Notwithstanding the views of the extremists it was 'really most satisfactory,' remarked Minto that the moderate members of the Congress welcomed all he had said. The *Hindoo Patriot* which was a pro-Congress paper remarked that the Muhammadans were 'quite within their rights' to pray for continued and increasing patronage from the Government. It pointed out that none could have any quarrels with the Muhammadans over these demands. The fact that the Government repeatedly exhorted the Muhammadans

to educate and fit themselves better for positions of trust and importance was looked upon by the paper as 'a sure guarantee against the interests of any community being thoughtlessly sacrificed to those of the backward and uneducated classes of Muhammadans.'¹⁵⁰ More characteristic was the reaction of the *Bande Mataram* which asserted that 'had there been any true statesmen' among the Hindus, then 'the recent all-India Muhammadan address to the Viceroy would have received the unanimous support of the Hindu press.' Arguing in a novel manner the Paper suggested that if the educated Hindus left the fields of employment and representation 'entirely or almost entirely' to the Muslims, then the same disillusionment which came over the former in nearly a hundred years was bound to come to the latter. 'And such a disillusionment would help solve the Hindu-Muhammadan question far more easily and effectively than anything that we can think of.'¹⁵¹ The Congress leadership busy in other activities did not immediately grasp the significance of Minto's performance at Simla. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was inclined to view the deputation as representing the Muhammadans of the old school whose attitude towards the Muslims and the Congress programme was one of unequivocal opposition. 'The address, as finally settled, does not however meet with the approval of many of the younger generation...'¹⁵² of the English educated Muslims who were naturally advocates of the elective system. The Muhammadan deputation was thus branded by the *Patrika* as 'a got-up affair' and fully engineered by interested officials... So the all-India Mahommedan Deputation is neither all-India nor all-Mahomedan, nor even a Deputation, properly so-called.'¹⁵³

The *Indian Daily News* on the contrary, not denying that the deputation was 'unquestionably a strong one,' yet regretted that it was 'not so representative' in view of East Bengal being represented only by Khan Bahadur Nawab Ali Chaudhri.¹⁵⁴ Although the Aga Khan had assured the editor of the Paper that the deputation had been pleased with the Viceroy's reply, the latter apprehended that this assurance would not please the younger generation of Muhammadans. The majority of them believed that they had been the victims of general sympathy for a long time, and they felt that the time had arrived when something more substantial than lip sympathy

should be shown to them. 'My own impression is that after the Dacca Educational Conference, young Muhammadans will hold a political conference there and draw up their own programme.'¹⁵⁵ Even the Nawab of Dacca, while exulting over the Viceroy's reply, remarked : 'All that it (Bengal Press) has now to say is to minimise the beneficent effect of His Excellency's reply and to belittle it as doing nothing more than what the Congress party had hitherto contended for, and of course some of our young and inexperienced men have rushed into print and taking their cue from these comments have gone so far as to speak disparagingly of the result of the Deputation and some even with disappointment...' Referring to the Lyon Circular¹⁵⁶ and its effects on the more extended employment of Muhammadans in the police department, the Nawab triumphantly pointed out that 'the unity of the Muhammadans in the province being established, appointments in the Government service in proportion to our numbers will be given to us and our educated youths need no longer play with "the shuttle of sedition" to secure their means of getting on in life.'¹⁵⁷ In an article published in the *Mussalman*, N. C. Kelkar, editor of the *Mahratta* stated that 'opinions may differ as to the propriety of the course taken by the Mohammedans in sending a sectional deputation to the Viceroy at a time... when communal considerations were already accentuated by natural as well as artificial causes. But there will be a practical unanimity of opinion as to the very welcome change that has evidently come upon the mind of the Mahommedan community in regard to its political future.' Having found out that an obtrusively loyal partisanship of Government did not practically carry their community any further than the followers of the Congress, the Muhammadans at length realized that they had not even the satisfaction which the latter had of rationally formulating their demands, and voicing them forth.¹⁵⁸ But it was a tragic coincidence of history that the Muslim demand for separative and privileged treatment, accepted and even encouraged by the British bureaucracy in India, became the starting point for the creation of a general situation of communal tension. Armed with Minto's assurance and Hare's support, the latent strength of the Muslim separatists became manifest. The Muslims soon clashed with the anti-Partitionists

in some of the worst communal riots that broke out in places like Comilla and Jamalpur in East Bengal (1907). Out of the repression and reforms that were the main features round which the politics of the time moved, grew the first separatist, communal organization of the Muslims, the Muslim League, which was destined to pursue in the coming decades a policy rather hostile to the national movement.

With the death of Sir Syed Ahmad (1898) and Abdul Latif (1893), and the elevation of Ameer Ali to the Bench first and his subsequent migration to England, there came about a change in the character of Muslim leadership both in the United Provinces and in Bengal. Paradoxically enough, Sir Syed's policy of giving an impetus to western education among the Muslims produced by the turn of the century a generation of educated Muslim youths who complained of the political inactivity of the Aligarh school. The tussle which was now set on foot in the Aligarh school of politics ranged between the young and advanced school and the old-fashioned conservative elements. Even in Sir Syed Ahmad's time a sharp line of cleavage prevailed between the Aligarh policy which was tolerant, rationalistic and pro-English, and the so-called Hyderabad policy which was believed to be conservative, ultra-orthodox in religious matters, and pan-Islamic.¹⁵⁹ Ibbetson remarked quite prophetically that if the former won, 'there will be at least a political *rapprochement* between Hindus and Mohammedans: if the latter, it seems almost certain that the relations will be more strained than ever before.'¹⁶⁰ The 'ideological and political successor' of Sir Syed, Mohsin-ul-Mulk and the old guard therefore frantically sought for 'a *pourparler* with the authorities and a show of favours so that they might confront their rebellious juniors with an evidence of political success',¹⁶¹ and thereby prevent young Islam from joining the Congress. The outcome of these efforts, as has been noticed earlier, was the reception of the Muslim deputation at Simla, which temporarily at least, heightened the prestige of the Aligarh men and determined the future course of action.

Simultaneously in Bengal, the Partition gave a new impetus to the political activities of the Muslims and a cause for their further alienation from the Hindus. In a memorial

to the Secretary of State Morley, adopted at a public meeting assembled on 'Partition Day', the inhabitants of Eastern Bengal and Assam categorically stated that 'the existing Province has enabled the consolidation of the Mahomedan Community as a whole under one Government,' which they considered 'to be of the greatest advantage to them...' ¹⁶² The worst apprehensions centring round this colossal blunder had come true. It sowed the seeds of communal rancour between the Hindus and Muslims on the one hand, and reinforced the separatist spirit of the Muslims (a legacy from their *Wahhabi* days) on the other. The newly-created province of Eastern Bengal and Assam with its Muslim majority was regarded by the followers of Islam as a source of strength and a centre of their political gravity. The leader of this new reaction was Nawab Salimullah of Dacca. Nobody had gained more in prestige and influence from the Partition than the Nawab. Dacca had become the capital of the new province and he had become its premier nobleman. In a speech at Munshiganj delivered on the day the Partition scheme was put into effect, the Nawab observed that the Partition had 'aroused us from inaction and directed our attention to activities and struggle.' He and his associates decided to organize the Muslim community into a compact body and to set up an association which would serve as a mouthpiece for the expression of views on all social and political matters affecting the interests of the community. The Mohammedan Political Union was thus founded with Nawab Salimullah as its patron. The chief object, as the organizers stated, was 'consolidation and conservation of the strength of the Muslims of the new Province as a whole for all public purposes.' All other associations and organizations were asked to affiliate themselves to it.

Even before the Partition of Bengal was carried out, Hindu-Muslim relations in Upper India, as has been seen earlier, were in a state of turmoil. The last decade of the nineteenth century had witnessed two great encounters of religious feelings between the Hindu opposers and Muslim supporters of the slaughter of kine. The encouragement of Hindi by Sir Anthony MacDonnell, the Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces once again sparked off the Urdu-Hindi controversy. Added to this was the long-standing grievance of

the Muslims as regards securing Government jobs and adequate representation in the Councils. With the death of Sir Syed, the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental Defence Association of the Muslims had also become defunct. At a meeting of the Urdu Defence Association held at Lucknow on 18 August 1900, under the presidentship of Mohsin-ul-Mulk, the latter pointed out that Sir Syed's attitude never implied a total ban on political activity. Viqar-ul-Mulk also agreed that the Muslims were in a predicament, faced with the alternatives of either marching into the Congress camp *en bloc* which was considered 'tantamount to suicide' and was therefore categorically rejected,¹⁶³ or of establishing a corresponding political organization of their own.¹⁶⁴ Eventually a meeting of the leading Muslims of India was held at Lucknow on 20-21 October 1901, at the residence of Hamid Ali Khan, under the presidentship of Syed Sharfuddin who later became a judge of the Calcutta High Court. The need for a political council of chosen Muslims was forcefully stressed by Hamid Ali and Sharfuddin. Viqar-ul-Mulk then presented a scheme for the formation of a political association which culminated in the foundation in July 1903, of the Mohammedan Political Association at Saharanpur in U.P. This organization however, did not grow any stronger and became defunct.¹⁶⁵ Throughout this period, the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* published several articles on the necessity of organizing and consolidating the scattered Muslim forces, the importance of which was emphasized time and again throughout the last two decades of the nineteenth century by Ameer Ali from Bengal. The question of establishing a central political organization for the Muslims was raised once more in March 1904, by Mian Shah Din.¹⁶⁶ But in view of the Partition of Bengal and the more immediate necessity of memorializing to the Viceroy in connection with the proposed legislative scheme, the decision for a Muslim political organization was for the time being shelved.

After the Muslim deputation had presented its address at the Viceregal Lodge, Simla, on 1 October, the Aga Khan and other Muslim leaders assembled there had come to the conclusion that their 'only hope lay along the lines of independent organisation and action,' and that they must secure 'independent political recognition from the British Government

as a nation within a nation.'¹⁶⁷ 'I have asked all the Members of the Simla Deputation to form into a permanent committee,' wrote the former to Dunlop Smith. It had already been proposed at the Lucknow Conference of September 1906 (mentioned earlier) that the right course would be to take advantage of the annual gathering of Muslim representatives from all parts of the country at the All-India Mohammedan Educational Conference at Dacca in December 1906 to lay the foundation of an all-India political organization.¹⁶⁸ This proposal along with a few notes sent by the Nawab of Dacca regarding the advisability of forming a Central Mohammedan Association were discussed and approved at an informal meeting of those who had assembled at Simla. According to Syed Nawab Ali, the meeting at Simla decided to form a central organization for the Muslims of India under the name of 'Confederacy'.¹⁶⁹ In November 1906, Syed Ameer Ali wrote an article on the memorial of the Muslim deputation, in which he observed that while the Hindus possessed powerful institutions for safeguarding their rights and privileges, the Indian Muslims were suffering acutely from inanition. 'The associations that exist in different parts of the country possess no solidarity and display no conception of the essential requirements of the community...'¹⁷⁰ Two years later on 6 May 1908, Ameer Ali in course of his speech at the inaugural meeting of the London branch of the All-India Muslim League remarked that had the Muslims recognized the value of 'corporal communal activity' along with the advance of English education, their position would not have been 'one of comparative subordination.' Throughout his political career, Ali was convinced that notwithstanding the 'general interests' of the different religious communities of India which were 'identical', the Muhammadans had their own particular interests which concerned them alone. In his opinion, it was impossible for them to merge their separate community existence in that of any other nationality or to strive for the attainment of their ideals under the aegis of any other organization than their own.¹⁷¹

Nawab Salimullah of Dacca who could not join the Simla deputation, took the first concrete step towards establishing a Muslim organization. In November 1906, he circulated a

scheme for the formation of the Muslim All-India Confederacy. The scheme was the embryo from which the Muslim League emerged. In propounding the scheme the Nawab held that in view of the multiplicity of Muslim associations coming into existence in different parts of the country, often in direct opposition and conflict to each other, the concept of an all-India association naturally gained ground. The Nawab further asserted that the Muslims 'as true and loyal subjects of the British Raj,' must do their utmost to controvert and thwart the influence of the Congress which was working for the destruction of all that the Muslims held dear. The *Bengalee* strongly criticized the Nawab's proposal, took particular objection to the name 'The Muslim All-India Confederacy', and hoped that the Muslims in general would not accept it. The *Times of India* considered Salimullah's circular 'ill-advised and indiscreet', though with the *Pioneer* and the *Englishman* it appreciated the formation of such a political association as essential in the country's interest. When the All-India Mohammedan Educational Conference met at Dacca in December 1906, Nawab Salimullah's scheme became the basis of discussion among the Muslim leaders who had assembled there from all parts of India. A strong contingent from the Aligarh College headed by Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk ('old man eloquent') attended the conference. Archbold's first visit to these parts to attend the conference was very significant in the light of his role in connection with the Simla Deputation in the recent past. The participation of Government officers in the proceedings and the discussion of political subjects came in for sharp criticism by the *Bengalee* which remarked: 'It has completely unmasked this so-called "Educational Conference" and revealed it in its true colours. Though called "educational", it was really a political gathering, anti-Congress, anti-Hindu and anti-National.'¹⁷² In an interview with the representative of the *Englishman*, Maulvi Rafiuddin Ahmad, Bar-at-Law, a gentleman well-known in Bombay and one of the leaders of the new Muslim movement, explained the genesis, scope and aims of the League which was about to be established. He pointed out that the formation of an association to focus the views of the community became imperative after the interests of the great body of Bengali Muhammadans had

been jeopardized by the selfish contentions of a small but eloquent Hindu minority. After the Muhammadan deputation to Lord Minto in October, its inception became possible, and the *modus operandi* was reviewed after the close of the Education Conference at Dacca. In the Maulvi's opinion, the Nawab of Dacca had done a great service to the Muhammadans of India by inviting delegates to Dacca to bring the political views of the Indian Muhammadans to a focus and ensure concentration of energy. His scheme was not adopted in its entirety as the phraseology of parts of the document did not seem quite happy to the majority of the delegates, and the term 'confederacy' grated on the ears of not a few. The spirit of the Nawab's scheme was, however, appreciated and its essence approved. What is more, none but the Nawab of Dacca could have brought this to pass. Also it could scarcely have been done at any other place than at Dacca, where delegates coming from all parts of India received an object lesson on the necessity for such an institution and saw to what dangers, material and moral, an inarticulate community was exposed.¹⁷³ This apart, another very valid reason may be conjectured as to why it was deemed more appropriate to found the League at Dacca. The turmoil connected with the partition of Bengal may have been the immediate cause. In his scheme for the Confederacy, the Nawab of Dacca had mentioned that there were a few who seemed to have a fear that a Central association of the kind wanted 'would interfere with such a centre of Mohammedan life as is now bound up with the Aligarh College and Institute,' since one of the chief principles of the latter was to avoid all politics.¹⁷⁴ A few years earlier, the Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces, Sir A. P. MacDonnell, also thought that some of the trustees of the Aligarh College were not pleased with the idea that there should be a break with the past, and that Aligarh should become a more militant factor in Muhammadan politics.¹⁷⁵

On 30 December 1906, the All-India Muslim League came into existence with the following objectives: '(a) to promote loyalty to the British Government, (b) to protect and advance the political rights and interests of Mussalmans of India and respectfully represent their needs and aspirations to Government and (c) to prevent the rise among Mussalmans of any

feelings of hostility towards other communities without prejudice to the other objects of the League.' 'There can be no better example of double talk than the last objective,' remarked Dr Amales Tripathi in *The Extremist Challenge*. In his view, the League would never really have to fulfill the third pious wish, because of the controversy that raged over the partition and boycott agitation. 'Sir Syed's legacy', Dr Tripathi observes, 'was safe in the hands of the Aligarh and Bengal Nawabs.'¹⁷⁶ The Provincial Committee of the All-India Muslim League appointed at its Dacca session in 1906 Nawabs Viqar-ul-Mulk and Mohsin-ul-Mulk as secretaries and included the following members from Eastern and Western Bengal.

Eastern Bengal—Nawab Salimullah of Dacca, Nawab Ali Chaudhuri (Mymensingh) and Maulvi Himayatuddin (Barisal),

Western Bengal—Abdul Rahim, Bar-at-Law (Calcutta), Nawab Naseeruddin Khayal (Calcutta), Nawab Amir Hossein Khan (Calcutta), Shamsul Huda Vakil (Calcutta), Serajul Islam Vakil (Calcutta) and Abdul Hamid, editor, *Moslem Chronicle* (Calcutta).¹⁷⁷

The inception of the All-India Muslim League evoked mixed feelings in the contemporary press. It would provide 'an effective answer to the Congress,' as well as afford 'an avenue for the publication of Muhammadan aspirations. It was high time that the Muhammadans of India found a voice,' remarked the *Englishman*.¹⁷⁸ The *Times* considered that the proposed Muslim League was 'the outcome of the Congress.' It doubted whether, despite the pacific language of its founders, the League would make for peace. Anyhow, its formation exposed the hollowness of the Congress pretension to speak for the entire people of India.¹⁷⁹ The *Spectator* admitted that the objects of the League were excellent, but did not like the 'feeling among Muslims that they must organize in a camp by themselves. That is the real danger of the National Congress...that in agitating for union it makes for racial disunion.' The *Morning Post* warned the League to remain 'entirely defensive and protective' since any deviation from its path 'will call at once for the most drastic intervention of the British rulers.' The *Contemporary Review* declared that 'the Muslims of India have forsaken the shades of retirement for

the political arena, henceforth a new factor in Indian politics has to be reckoned with.¹⁸⁰ One is surprised to find the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* completely silent on the formation of the League. The *Bengalee* on the contrary remarked that the League and its branches were 'engineered mostly by Government pensioners or ex-officials or gentlemen who are compelled to solicit Government assistance in their family or pecuniary difficulties' and that the organization did not represent 'the opinion and sentiments of the independent sections of the Mahomedan Community.' In its opinion, the League did not satisfy the aspirations of Young Islam, brought up under modern influences and environments, and that the sole object of the Nawab Bahadur was to make a tool of this League in his career of supporting the Partition. The *Bengalee* further observed that the League would, 'If it seeks to fulfil its mission, fraternise with the Congress and eventually coalesce with it. If not, it will go the way of the Patriotic Association of the late Sir Syed Ahmed.'¹⁸¹ The above reaction is symptomatic of the marked change in the political atmosphere of the country during the half a century under consideration, if one remembers that the foundation of the premier political organization of the Muslims at Calcutta in 1855 was hailed by the British Indian Association and the *Hindoo Patriot* as quite natural in view of the separate status of the Muslims in the body politic.¹⁸²

The year 1906 was significant in more senses than one. It witnessed a distinct cleavage in the ranks of the nationalists between the two political factions, moderates and extremists. The chief interests of the Congress session of 1906 which met at Calcutta centred round the proposals of the extremist party about *swadeshi* and connected problems. On 28 December 1906, a resolution recording an emphatic protest against the Partition of Bengal was moved in the Congress session by Khaja Atikullah of Dacca, brother of Nawab Salimullah. From the Congress point of view a special interest was attached to Atikullah's denunciation of the Partition and his public declaration that the Hindus and Muhammadans should enter a united protest against it. The official authorities on their part reported that 'the action of the Bengal leaders in inveigling this half-brother of the Nawab of Dacca to move

this resolution by reason of his enmity with the Nawab has tended to strain the relations between educated Muhammadans and the Hindu agitators.¹⁸³ Two days later, when the Muslim League was founded at Dacca (30 December 1906), the following resolution regarding the partition of Bengal was adopted : 'This meeting, in view of the clear interests of the Muhammadans in Eastern Bengal, considers that the partition is sure to prove beneficial to the community which constitutes the majority of the population. All methods of agitation such as boycotting should be firmly condemned and discouraged.'¹⁸⁴ The above is a clear proof of the fact that the pro-partition agitation moved by the Muslims was for the first time institutionalized on an all-India basis with the foundation of the Muslim League. And almost simultaneously, communalism in Indian politics came to be established on a definite basis. The Leaguers took strong exception to the anti-Partition resolution adopted by the Congress which in their opinion did not represent the Muhammadan opinion. Rafiuddin Ahmad in his interview with the *Englishman's* representative frankly confided that 'if the advice of Mr. O'Donnell were taken by the Bengalees and a deputation sent to England to ask for the rescinding of the Partition, the Muhammadans would immediately send another deputation insisting on its maintenance.'¹⁸⁵ The schism was complete when in an issue of his paper *New India* about the same time Bepin Chandra Pal, one of the famous extremist trio, pointed out forcibly the complete failure of the efforts which were made to show that the Muhammadans were working with the Hindus in the present political agitation and urged that no further trouble should be taken to bring the Muhammadans into line with the Hindus in this respect.¹⁸⁶ Welcoming the communal character of the League, the organ of official opinion, the *Englishman* remarked, 'It is good to see that it has come in the shape calculated to be most acceptable to the Government of the Empire, and most helpful to the advancement of its progress and the conservation of its peace...We in India today are assisting at the evolution of a new factor in the Imperial problem.' Expressing its fervent conviction in the perpetuation of British rule in India 'for many years to come,' the paper remarked that while the orators of the Congress refused to acknowledge this elementary

truth, the founders of the All-India Muslim League not only recognized it, but also asserted that loyalty to the British Government was only another form of loyalty to their own interests. In the opinion of the *Englishman* the new body was a thing not only to be cordially welcomed but also to be fostered, for it was 'in its essence sane, not hysterical, solid not frothy, sensible not absurd, representative, not artificial.'¹⁸⁷ Though the *Englishman* at first nurtured some doubts regarding the chances of the League being captured by the Congress, these doubts were soon set at rest by the *Daily Telegraph* reporting from Lucknow: 'They are more remote than chances of a Babu Government in India.'¹⁸⁸

The bureaucracy did not lag behind their organs in upholding the League and denigrating the Congress. In a letter to the Secretary to the Government of India, the Chief Secretary to the Government of East Bengal, P. Lyon, remarked, 'One of the most noticeable features of the National Congress in Calcutta...has been the abstention of Muhammadans from its deliberations, whether as delegates or merely as spectators.' 'The abstention of Muhammadans from the Congress meetings was rendered more noticeable by the assembly of the Muhammadan Educational Conference at Dacca...which attracted practically all the leading Muhammadans of this province, besides a large number of representatives of the Muhammadans of other parts of India.' It is indeed surprising that in the 'long lists of delegates who attended it from Eastern Bengal,' Lyon did not find 'one single name of importance or influence among the Muhammadan community of the Province.' Khajah Atikullah was easily dismissed as 'a man of weak mind and defective intellect,' who along with his immediate adherents among the members of the Dacca family 'has no real political significance,' and his defection was 'due to purely personal motives.' It was further alleged that 'paid Muhammadan agitators such as Abdul Husain and Abdul Guffur...have done their best to attract Muhammadan villagers,...while it is reported by the Calcutta Police that the preacher Abdul Kasim has been induced to start a new paper, the *Mussalman*, in the same interest and has been advanced Rs 3,500 by a part proprietor of the *Bengalee* to do so.' At the same time the formation of the Muhammadan

Vigilance Committee¹⁸⁹ in Calcutta and the Muslim League in Dacca had been met by the foundation of a 'Bengal Muhammadan Association' and an 'Indian Mussalman Association' in Calcutta. These last two Associations were alleged to have been founded at the instigation of the Hindus by a few young Muhammadans who have for some time past been in league with the Bengali agitators. The above organization did not obviously include 'any Muhammadan of any influence in either Bengal or Eastern Bengal and Assam,' a fact which the bureaucracy repeated *ad nauseum*.¹⁹⁰ It may be mentioned in this connection that while the Muslim League was being formed at Dacca, the Muslim supporters of the Congress did not sit idle. A section of the Muslims who had been noted as supporters of the Congress and the anti-Partition agitation, congregated on 31 December 1906 at the residence of Abdul Rasul and founded the All-India Muhammadan Association as a counter to the League. Nawab Syed Mohamed Bahadur was its President and Abdul Rasul its Secretary.¹⁹¹ As a matter of fact, even before the foundation of the League, 'the liberal and advanced section' of the Muslim community met on 3 November 1906 to discuss the question of establishing a Muhammadan Association. Maulvi D. M. Soheli-ud-din presided and the 'Bengal Muhammadan Association' was founded 'to advance the cause and watch and protect the interests of Mussulman community by all legitimate and constitutional means.' A provisional Committee of the following gentlemen was formed :

A. Rasul, President

A. H. Ghaznavi, Treasurer

Abul Kasem, Secretary

Mujibur Rahman, Joint Secretary.¹⁹²

But the Associations failed to extend their influence among the educated Muslims who preferred to go the communal way. As subsequent events proved, it was rather the Muslim League which caught the fascination of the Bengali Muslims as those of other parts of India.

There is a general tendency among some scholars (notably, M. S. Jain) to regard the Muslim League as a child of the Aligarh movement. Although Syed Ahmad can in no sense of the term be regarded as indifferent to politics, yet neither

in speech nor in action, did he ever envisage the foundation of a political association of the type of the Muslim League. He was as much conscious of the separate status of the Muslims as almost any other Muslim leader of his time. But this did not preclude the possibility of co-operation with the Hindus in the beginning, as was shown by his foundation of the British Indian Association at Aligarh in 1866. Subsequently however, due to a variety of factors, Sir Syed dissociated himself from the Congress, not primarily out of spite for the Hindus, but because he viewed the Congress type of agitation as harmful for his co-religionists. Towards the later part of his life he developed the 'fear of Hindu domination to buttress his rather waning case for loyalty' towards the Government, in the face of the growing influence of the Congress. His foundation of the Patriotic Association and subsequently of the Mohammedan Defence Association should be looked at from this point of view. More intent on the educational upliftment of his co-religionists Sir Syed would perhaps not have founded these two organizations, had he not deemed it absolutely necessary to controvert the growing influence of the Congress.

Unlike their co-religionists in Upper India, the Muslims of Bengal had founded their premier political organization as early as 1855, on the basis of separate community-consciousness in terms of 'distinct interests' and 'special grievances,' but not certainly out of any antagonism to the other sections of the population. After a short life, it sank into oblivion without leaving any lasting impact. But with the emergence of Syed Ameer Ali as the leader of the younger section of the Muslim middle-class in Bengal in the seventies of the last century, an attempt was made for the first time to unite the Muslims on an all-India basis and properly channelise their various grievances. Possibly because of the personality clash between Ameer Ali and Syed Ahmad and their disagreement over major issues, the prospects of joint action were rendered nugatory. Even in the face of their common antipathy towards the Congress separate representations were thought necessary to convey their disinclination to join this nationalist organization. The Defence Association founded at the instance of Sir Syed was limited in its operations to Upper India. Yet at

about the same time Ameer Ali's proposal for a conference of the Muslims from all parts of India did not fructify as the time was not considered to be appropriate and also from the opposition of Sir Syed. Viewed in this perspective, when the League came into existence, it was properly speaking Ameer Ali's dream come true. By the beginning of the twentieth century there was a change in the political atmosphere for the Muslims. The partition of Bengal and the proposed enlargement of the Councils gave scope perhaps for the first time for united action on the part of the Aligarh and the Bengal groups of Muslim politicians. If the Simla deputation in its origin, execution and ultimate success scored a victory for the Aligarh group, the conception of a separate political organization for the Muslims on an all-India basis and the initiative to found one came from Bengal. As a matter of fact despite the best efforts of the Upper Indian Muslims in this direction, nothing concrete emerged. The real architect of the League was the Nawab of Dacca and none but he 'could have brought this to pass.' While the Mohammedan Educational Conference had its origin and found its best expression in the Aligarh College, the Muslim League was a distinct and separate political organization and was in no way an outgrowth of the Mohammedan Educational Conference. The above was the opinion of an eminent contemporary Muslim gentleman Rafiuddin Ahmad, mentioned earlier.¹⁹³

Two months after the Simla deputation and almost simultaneously with the foundation of the League the Congress met at Calcutta. At this Congress session (December 1906) Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the future architect of Pakistan, delivered a memorable maiden speech in course of which he remarked that 'there should be no reservation for any class or any community' in the Legislative Councils and that the provision for reservation should be completely deleted. This was certainly against the spirit of the demands placed before Lord Minto in October 1906. Had the Muslims of India borne Jinnah's advice in mind the history of India might perhaps have taken a different turn. But Jinnah himself later changed his view altogether. The Muslim League was born pro-British and anti-Hindu. As the League was founded partly in response to the Hindu agitation against the Partition, the vitality of Muslim

separatism was since that time in direct proportion to the militancy of Hinduism. In the ultimate analysis, it was not religion which divided the Hindus and the Muslims politically, though community-consciousness based on religion became a potent factor in the shaping of Hindu-Muslim relations. 'Islam was not the cause but was employed as an excuse by persons who themselves were victims of accidents of history.'

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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⁵⁸ *Minto Papers*, No. 127: Hare to Minto, 31 October 1906.

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¹⁶⁹ Letter from Calcutta by Syed Nawab Ali to Mohsin-ul-Mulk dated 22 November 1906. Quoted Ibid. p. xliii.

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¹⁹³ *Englishman*, 4 January 1907.

APPENDIX A

Subject :

Petition from Syud Usghur Ali offering to present to Government a work called the '*Raddu Shirk*' (which will greatly assist government in putting down the *Wahhabis* in as much as it is opposed to the principles of the book called '*Kitab Tauhid*' written by Abdool Wahab Mujdi—the originator of the Wahhabi-Religion)

To

E. C. Bayley Esq.
Secretary to the Government of India
Home Department

The Humble petition of Syed Usghur Ali Humbly Showeth

.....

When your petitioner went down to Calcutta Maulvee Abdool Luteef Khan, Dy. Collector of 24 Pargunnahs told him in course of conversation that Government is in want of a copy of *Raddu Shirk* which was written to oppose and refute the book called the *Kitab Tauhid* composed by Abdool Wahab Mujdi the infidel which is the origin and principles of the religion of the mutinous Wahabees.....

Government wrote for the book to the Sheriff of Mecca and the Emperor of Rome but it was not found.....

The publicity of this book will render great assistance to the Government in inducing the Moosulman population of India.....to eradicate and destroy the mutinous Wahabees who bear great contempt and spite towards the Government and its well wishers.....

As Maulvee Abdool Luteef Khan, Dy. Collector, told your petitioner to procure the book and present it to Government through him. He solicits the favour of your informing him

if the Government is really in want of it for your petitioner does not think it advisable to deliver the same to Abdool Luteef Khan, Dy. Collector for presentation to Government but he is desirous of presenting it himself through your honour.....

As the book is in Arabic, he is desirous of translating it in Urdu before submitting it to your honour in order that it may be of use to the Public at large.....

Sd/- Syud A. A. §

APPENDIX- B

Statement showing for each District the Proportion of the Population of Hindus and Muslims in 1872 and 1881

Districts	Hindus			Mahomedans		
	1872	1881	Diff. of + or -	1872	1881	Diff. of + or -
Burdwan	80.31	80.51	+ .20	19.18	18.95	- .23
Bankoorah	89.54	87.43	-2.11	4.30	4.44	+ .14
Beerbhoom	79.78	77.70	-2.08	18.29	20.47	+2.18
Midnapore	89.89	88.78	-1.11	6.17	6.51	+ .34
Hooghly	80.80	81.25	...	19.01	18.64	...
Howrah	80.80	78.82	...	19.01	20.79	...
Total, Burdwan Division	84.75	83.96	- .79	12.79	12.95	+ .16
24 Pergunnahs	62.62	61.98	- .64	36.67	37.36	+ .69
Suburbs	59.00	59.62	+ .62	39.28	38.41	- .87
Calcutta	65.05	64.34	- .71	29.74	28.72	-1.02
Nuddea	45.29	42.85	-2.44	54.28	56.82	+2.54
Jessore	41.76	40.03	-1.73	57.79	59.93	+2.14
Khulna	48.40	48.48	+ .08	51.46	51.44	- .02
Moorshedabad	53.25	51.74	-1.51	46.10	48.08	+1.98
Total, Presidency Division	51.30	49.80	-1.50	47.90	49.52	+1.62
Dinajepore	46.75	47.32	+ .57	52.81	52.55	- .26
Rajshahye	21.88	21.57	- .31	77.66	78.41	+ .75
Rungpore	39.92	38.92	- 1.00	60.01	60.99	+ .98
Bogra	18.94	19.18	+ .24	80.73	80.80	+ .07
Pabna	29.82	27.55	- 2.27	69.92	72.41	+2.49
Darjeeling	73.72	81.65	+ 7.93	6.59	5.28	-1.31
Julpigoree	43.56	63.25	+19.69	34.62	35.85	+1.23
Total, Rajshahye Division	35.13	36.44	+ 1.31	63.12	63.16	+ .04

NOTE

Districts	<i>Hindus</i>			<i>Mahomedans</i>		
	1872	1881	Diff. of + or -	1872	1881	Diff. of + or -
Dacca	42.83	40.47	-2.36	56.67	59.09	+2.42
Fureedpore	41.82	40.07	-1.75	57.84	59.75	+1.91
Backergunge	32.84	32.85	+ .01	66.75	66.68	- .07
Mymensingh	34.78	32.35	-2.43	64.69	66.79	+2.10
Total, Dacca Division	37.66	35.88	-1.78	61.89	63.57	+1.68
Chittagong	26.71	24.30	- 2.41	70.51	70.82	+0.31
Noakholly	26.77	25.76	- 1.01	73.14	74.15	+1.01
Tipperah	35.23	33.63	- 1.60	64.75	66.32	+1.57
Chittagong Hill Tracts	.85	19.96	+19.11	1.97	7.17	+5.20
Total, Chittagong Division	29.68	28.48	- 1.20	67.41	67.86	+ .45
Total for Bengal Proper	50.03	48.45	- 1.58	48.45	50.16	+1.71

Foot Note

Report on the Census of Bengal, 1881, Table 9, p. 74. For the purpose of the present study, I have quoted the population statistics of only the Hindus and the Muslims.

APPENDIX. C

A list of Committee and Ordinary Members of the Mahomedan Association in 1857. §

Fuzloor Ruhman	... President
Abdool Baree	... Vice President
Mohummed Wujfeh	... Vice President
Mohummud Mukher	... Hony. Secretary
Abdoor Jobbar	... Member
Mohammad Abdoor Rowoof and Others	... Members

§ J. K. Majumdar (ed.), *Indian Speeches and Documents on British Rule 1821-1918* (Calcutta, 1937), pp. 67-69.

APPENDIX D

The number of Muhammadan candidates successful at the University examinations for the period 1888 to 1892 is shown as follows :§

	1888	1889	1890	1891	1892
Entrance	113	54	125	110	85
First Arts	19	21	57	16	47
Bachelors of Arts	12	18	21	12	14
Masters of Arts	1	1	3	2	2

§ *Report on the Administration of Bengal 1891 92*, p. 372.

APPENDIX E

	Number of Persons actu- ally employed, including officiating officers		
	Hindus	Muhammadans	
(a) <i>Executive Service</i>			
Dy. Magistrates & Dy. Collectors	237	171	26
Sub-Dy. Collectors and Tahsildars	102	78	18
Total Executive Service	339	249	44
(b) <i>Judicial Service</i>			
Subordinate Judges	48	46	1
Munsifs	236	227	8
Total Judicial Service	284	273	9
Total of Both Executive and Judicial Service	623	522	53

APPENDIX F

The Triennial Report of the Central National Mahomedan Association 1885-1888 in its List of Members gives the names of the following Hindu gentlemen (pp. 78-90).

Committee of Management : K. M. Chatterjee.

List of Honorary Vice-Presidents of the Central National Mahomedan Association :

Raja Indur Chandra Singh of Paikparah.

List of Subscribing Members :

1. A. M. Bose
2. Gunesh Chunder Chunder (Attorney, High Court)
3. Jadu Lal Mullick
4. R. N. Mittra (Barrister-at-Law, High Court)
5. Hon'ble Peary Mohun Mookerji—Uttarpara (and many others)

List of Honorary Members :

1. W. C. Bonnerjea
2. Jotindro Mohun Tagore, Moharajah
3. Modhusudan Dass
4. Nobo Gopal Mitter §
5. Rajendra Lal Mitter
6. Romesh Chunder Mitter, The Hon'ble
7. Surendra Nath Banerjee

(These apart, names of several Hindu members are found in the membership lists of the branch associations.)

§ It is interesting to note that the same Naba Gopal Mitra who preached the idea of Hindu nationalism so emphatically was also a member of a Muslim organization.

APPENDIX. G

The following is a list of the Muslim delegates from *Bengal Proper* attending the sessions of the Indian National Congress from 1885 to 1906. The list has been compiled on the basis of the list of delegates furnished in the appendices appended to the *report of the Indian National Congress* for each of these years. I have not been able to trace the files for the years 1896 and 1904 to 1906 at the Nehru Museum Library, New Delhi.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Number of Muslim delegates from Bengal proper</i>
1885	Bombay	None
1886	Calcutta	17
1887	Madras	1
1888	Allahabad	4
1889	Bombay	4
1890	Calcutta	14
1891	Nagpur	None
1892	Allahabad	None
1893	Lahore	None
1894	Madras	None
1895	Poona	None
1896	Calcutta	?
1897	Amraoti	None
1898	Madras	None
1899	Lucknow	1
1900	Lahore	None
1901	Calcutta	27
1902	Ahmedabad	1
1903	Madras	3

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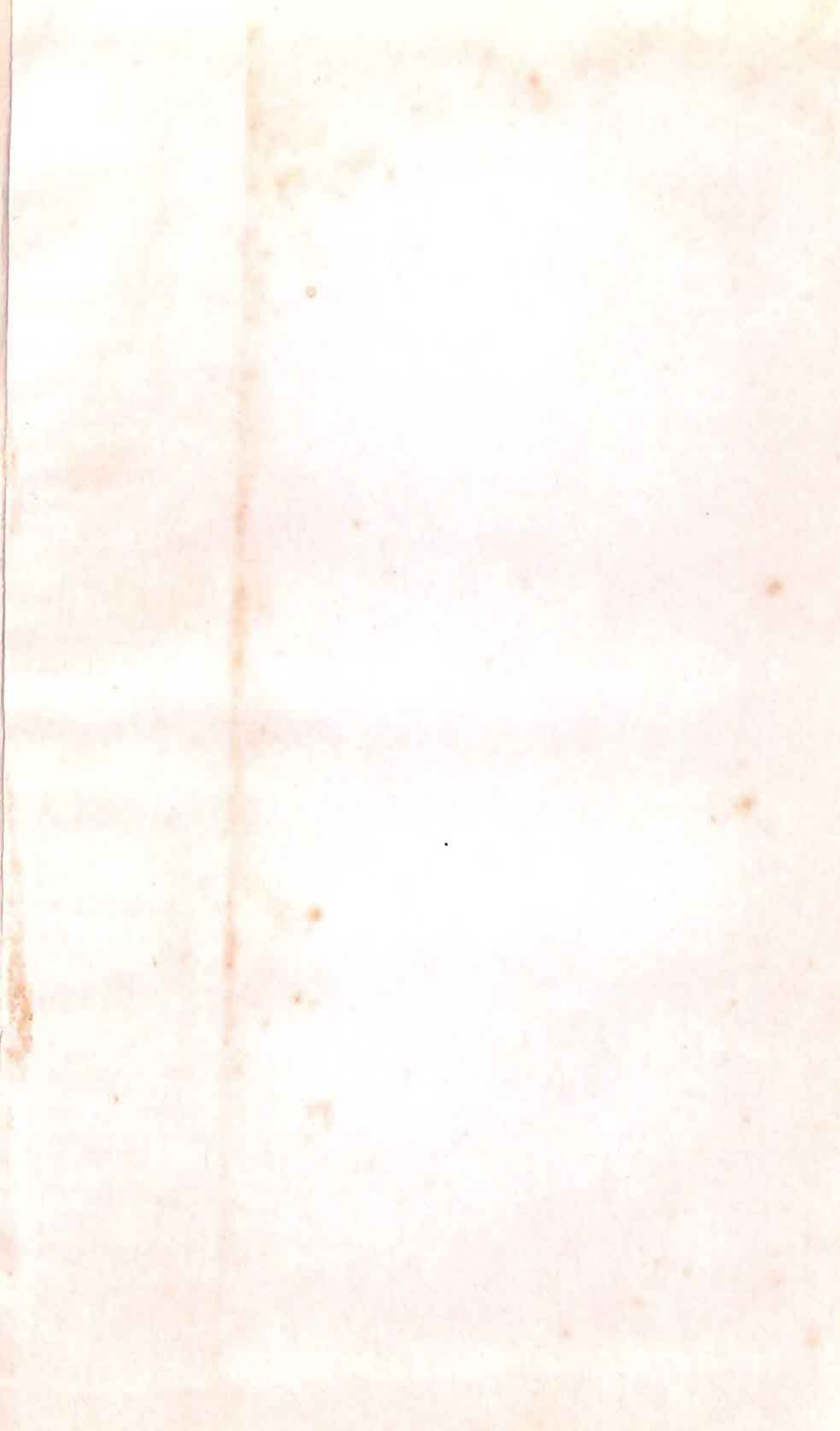
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